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# Teaching in the Entitlement Age: Faculty Perceptions Regarding Student Academic Entitlement Behavior

Nichole P. Gotschall  
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## COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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Nichole P. Gotschall

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Walden University  
2015

Abstract

Teaching in the Entitlement Age: Faculty Perceptions Regarding Student Academic

Entitlement Behavior

by

Nichole P. Gotschall

MAT, The University of West Alabama, 2001

BS, Livingston University, 1998

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Walden University

February 2016

## Abstract

Student academic entitlement behavior is a problem within the United States' higher education system. This behavior could affect student learning, harm institutional reputation, and inflict undue pressure on faculty. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand what faculty members identify as the causes and the implications of student academic entitlement behavior and the actions needed to inhibit the behavior. The work was supported by applying Morrow's conceptual framework that suggests student academic entitlement behavior challenges academic achievement. Completed at a for-profit university in the southern United States, the research questions of this study examined the faculty members' perceptions of student academic entitlement behavior. Data were collected from semi-structured interviews with a purposeful sample of 12 participants and analyzed using an eclectic coding method. The faculty acknowledged that some students enter the university with academic entitlement tendencies; however, the faculty perceived institutional practices and policies that sanctioned student consumerism as a primary enabler of the behavior. Emerged findings suggested an endorsement of learning-focused efforts, including explicit expectations of students, admittance practices, and andragogical professional development for the faculty to assist in curtailing the behavior. The findings of this study are presented in a position paper and afford an opportunity for social change by offering the faculty members' perceptions of a potentially damaging behavior. The findings are significant for educators who seek to initiate a conversation about the relationship between student academic entitlement behavior and institutional practices and how to inhibit the behavior within the institutional community.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this study to my boys. To my husband Mark, you are the true love of my life. I am so glad that you and I get to go through this life together.

Thank you for being “super-dad” and “super-hubby.” To my amazing son Ian, you are and will forever be my most favorite Ian...ever.

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Second, I would like to thank the administration and faculty of the research site. Thank you to the Chancellor, Chief Executive Officer, and Provost for welcoming this study at the institution. To the faculty, thank you for taking the time to share your stories; I truly appreciated your candor and your trust in me. Throughout this process, your dedication to your students and the university was clearly seen.

Last, but never least, I would like to thank my Alabama, South Carolina, and Tennessee families. Your support, encouragement, and patience over the years have been constant. I am able to be here because of you. I am forever grateful.

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## Section 1: The Problem

Established in 1636, America's institution of higher education maintains an unspoken mission to aid in the social development and cultural civility of the general community (Cohen & Kisker, 2010). Throughout the centuries, American higher education has evolved into a unique amalgamation of Great Britain's classical structure and Germany's research focus, while maintaining a forward-thinking philosophy to support an industrial nation and a global community. However, even within this progressive environment, the accepted gatekeeper of social and economic ascension is experiencing an increase of student academic entitlement behavior within its own community (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Finney & Finney, 2010; Lippmann, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009; Morrow, 1994; Reisman, 1980).

### Introduction

Academic entitlement behavior is the possible by-product of numerous catalytic factors. Empirical evidence found within historical and current academic literature has suggested an extensive range of social, economic, and political factors that influence the manifestation of student academic entitlement behavior (Cain, Romanelli, & Smith, 2012; Morrow, 1994; Reisman, 1980; Twenge, 2009).

Some research has suggested that the behavior is attributed to the institutional response to an increase in competing institutions within the market place (Finney & Finney, 2010; Lippmann et al., 2009; Szekeres, 2010). By corporatizing, institutions have begun to "cater to students to boost enrollment numbers" (Lippmann et al., 2009, p. 198). This approach, treating students as customers of the institution, has ultimately

caused an increase in student academic entitlement behavior (Cain et al., 2012; Finney & Finney, 2010; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2010, 2011).

Outside of the marketplace factors that drive change, researchers have focused on the correlation between multiple aspects of socio-culture factors and academic entitlement behavior (Boswell, 2012; Cain et al., 2012; Twenge, 2009). Much of the socio-cultural research has been constructed on the foundation of Twenge's (2009) research that suggested that the behavior of the Generation Y, or Millennial student, is a unique generational characteristic. Grounded in narcissistic actions, Twenge proposed that the learned behaviors of some Millennial students have amplified the perceived actions of student entitlement behavior. However, research suggesting generational factors as the cause of entitlement behaviors is not limited to the Millennial student. With the enrollments of adult learners (age 25 years and older) projected to increase 20% by 2020 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012, para. 6), academicians and researchers acknowledge the adult learner as a "change agent" in higher education (Burns, 2011, p. 1). Generational research has begun to consider the behavior and expectations of the adult learners as important variables in decision making (Cercone, 2008; The Council For Adult & Experiential Learning, 2010; Kasworm, 2010; Ross-Gordon, 2011).

Complementing the focus on generational factors, empirical research has sought to find a correlation between the behavior and various other factors of higher education students. Although Boswell (2012) suggested a correlation exists between academic

entitlement behavior and gender, Andrey et al. (2012) examined the correlation between learning styles, specifically “deep learning, surface learning, and strategic learning” (p. 22) and student academic entitlement behavior. One study compared behavioral patterns of first generation college students and continuing-generation students (Boswell, 2012). Finally, due to the increase use of social networking, Boswell (2012) studied the relationship between the manifestation of student academic entitlement behavior and the use of social media and found a strong correlation in “continuing-generation students” (p. 361).

Numerous concerns have arisen within the higher education community as a result of these catalytic and correlational factors. As Kopp and Finney (2013) suggested, due to student academic entitlement behavior, student incivility and lack of responsibility have increased. Research has also suggested a strong correlation between grade inflation and behavior (Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011; Tucker & Courts, 2010). Ultimately, student academic entitlement behavior is compromising the overall learning experience (Cain et al., 2012; Morrow, 1994; Schaefer, Barta, Whitley, & Stogsdill, 2013).

However, empirical research specific to the faculty perceptions of student academic entitlement behaviors is limited at best. Designed as “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system” (Creswell, 2012, p. 465), the current qualitative case study focused on the central phenomenon of student academic entitlement behavior. Bounded by a mid-size university located in the southern United States, the current study was designed to explore faculty’s perceptions of the causes and implications of academic entitlement

behavior and to identify strategies needed, based on faculty perception, to inhibit the behavior.

### **Definition of the Problem**

Definitional specificity of academic entitlement ranges and often aligns to suggested causes of the behavior. Although numerous research has focused on the correlation between a business model application and a higher education environment, possibly resulting in the perception that students are customers (Cain et al., 2012; Finney & Finney, 2010; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010, 2011), other research suggested that generational characteristics leads to and often enables entitled students (Kasworm, 2010; Plageman, 2011; Ross-Gordon, 2011; Twenge, 2009). However, remaining neutral to the potential cause of the behavior, Chowning and Campbell (2009) have defined academic entitlement as “the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success” (p. 982). Singleton-Jackson et al.’s (2011) postulation beyond Chowning and Campbell’s framework of diminished responsibility stated that entitled students expect faculty to go “beyond their obligation of providing educational opportunities and effective, quality instruction” (p. 232).

It is this “expectation of academic success without...personal responsibility” (Chowning & Campbell, 2009, p. 982), perceived by some of the study site’s faculty, which served as the catalyst for the current study. Noting a change in student conduct, reflective of increased academic entitlement behavior, institutional faculty indicated that some of the student population displayed a lack of engagement and effort within the



academic environment. Expecting accommodations and recompenses in exchange for minimal or no effort, these entitled students sought to reap the benefit of those around them who put forth the required effort needed for academic success.

### **Rationale**

Established in 1962 as a one year business school to assist people in preparing for careers within the field of business, the now regionally accredited, for-profit university, which served as the study site, has an enrollment of 5,600 students (Carnegie Foundation, 2010). Encompassing three campuses (one main and two extension campuses), the university is guided by its mission to provide “educational enrichment opportunities for the intellectual, social, and professional development of its students” (college website, 2014, para. 1). To achieve its mission, the institution offers a curriculum focused on the industry needs of its local and global environments spanning from the certificate level up to doctoral degrees.

As an open admission university, the institution accepts applicants who fulfill the following admissions requirements. Applicants must submit all applicable diplomas or transcripts from previous educational institutions. Furthermore, students may provide official ACT or SAT scores or complete a university-administered entrance evaluation (college website, 2014a). In order to support the student population, the research site has taken actions as an advocate of a “student-centered learning environment” (college website, 2014, paras. 1 & 2), including offering an expansive range of programs, providing academic support services, and student activities. However, some faculty members often found themselves addressing excessive or unusual requests from some

students (personal communication, August 2014). These requests displayed behaviors that reflected the students' expectation of treatment that spanned beyond the understood role and responsibilities of the faculty member.

Observed behaviors at the study site align to the four facets of academic entitlement identified by Singleton-Jackson et al. (2011). Behaviors reflective of these four components have been observed throughout various academic settings within the institution. Requests of accommodation, unrelated to American with Disabilities Act of 1990 accommodations, are student requests that extend beyond the traditional role and responsibility of a faculty member. Examples of accommodation requests include, but are not limited to, assumptions that the course professor supplies absent students copious notes upon their return or provides a list of hyper-focused examination topics or questions to aid in test preparation (personal communication, August 2014). "Reward for effort" entails the belief that incentives are due for any amount of effort made (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2011, p. 229). One identified example of an expected "reward for effort" includes students' requests to re-take tests when scores received were below the students' expectations.

In addition to "accommodation" and "reward for effort," Singleton-Jackson et al. (2011) identified "control and product value" as additional facets of academic entitlement behavior (p. 229). Whereas Singleton-Jackson et al. (2011) defined *control* as students' needs to manage every component of their educational experience, academic and non-academic, for the purpose of this study, *control* will remain within the confines of the academic environment (p. 229). Although perhaps less severe, but equally imposing,

observed controlling behaviors included, but were not limited to, entering class late, attempting to submit assignments excessively late, remaining unengaged during class time, and excessive class time disruptions (personal communication, August 2014).

Finally, the facet of *product value* reflects the expectations of the student as it relates to their “financial investment” (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2011, p. 229). It is this final facet of academic entitlement that aligns specifically to the corporatization of higher education (Delucchi & Smith, 1997; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2011).

### **Evidence of the Problem From the Professional Literature**

The experiences noted by the study site’s faculty are not unique. Defined as “the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success” (Chowning & Campbell, 2009, p.982), academic research and anecdotal evidence regarding academic entitlement behavior began to surface during the last decade of the 20th century (Boretz, 2004; Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008; Delucchi & Smith, 1997; Edmundson, 1997; Finney & Finney, 2010; Kopp & Finney, 2013; Lippmann et al., 2009; Morrow, 1994).

Although much research aligns the cause of academic entitlement behavior to the corporatization of institutions (Lippmann et al., 2009; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; Schaefer et al., 2013) or generational behavior (Alexander & Sysko, 2011; Kopp & Finney, 2013; Twenge, 2009), the academic community, including the research site, has yet to reach a consensus regarding the cause of the behavior. Inserting itself, either by choice or by force, into the system of free enterprise, higher education has become “big business” (personal communication, December 9, 2013). To remain competitive,

institutions appeal to the needs of the consumer. Students, as consumers of education, are the target market. As a result, some students have approached their academic experience as a financial transaction. This consumerist mentality clouds the goal of higher education, potentially causing some students to assume that because they have paid the tuition, they are ultimately entitled to a high mark or a conferred degree. From a generational perspective, research has concentrated on the populations of traditional students (Alexander & Sysko, 2011; Bergman, Westerman, & Daly, 2010; Burke, Karl, Peluchette, & Evans, 2013) and adult learners (Burns, 2011; Kasworm, 2010; Ross-Gordon, 2011). Today's traditional students, known as Millennial students, often demand instant gratification, display narcissistic behaviors, and expect rewards and recognition for all efforts (Alexander & Sysko, 2011; Burke et al., 2013).

Consequently, Moses and Moses-Hrushovski (1990) theorized that these behaviors reflect "an exaggerated sense of entitlement" (as cited in Kopp & Finney, 2013, p. 323). Likewise, generational research has begun to consider the behavior and expectations of the adult learners (Cercone, 2008; The Council For Adult & Experiential Learning, 2010; Kasworm, 2010; Ross-Gordon, 2011). Due to the projected increase in the enrollment of adult learners, some institutions have redesigned their curriculum (Cercone, 2008), modified their admissions policies (Plageman, 2011, p. 138), and realigned their mission statements (Kasworm, 2010) to ensure that the needs of the adult learners are met.

## **Historical Evolution of Academic Entitlement Behavior**

Although this study is not historical in nature, the significance of the evolution of America's higher education institution aids in the establishment of society's expectations of accessibility, perhaps contributing to an academically entitled culture. Established in 1636, America's institution of higher education originated to aid in colonial social development and cultural civility. Based in clerical studies, this guidance was first provided by the schooled men of the Harvard College (Harvard University). Eager to ensure that cultural civility was grounded in the specific teachings of various dogmas, nine additional institutions, including College of William and Mary, Yale College (Yale University), College of Philadelphia (University of Pennsylvania), College of New Jersey (Princeton University), King's College (Columbia University), College of Rhode Island (Brown University), Queen's College (Rutgers, the State University of New York), and Dartmouth College were established between 1693 and 1769. Framed in part from the original "archetype" of Western institutions, The Palace School, which was established by Emperor Charlemagne in A.D. 782, (Kaye, Bickel, & Birtwistle, 2006, p. 87) and modeled after the mother country's institutions, Oxford and Cambridge, the New World's institutions eventually moved away from a religious alignment, but maintained missions centered on civil and productive communities. Although this transformation expanded society's ability to access America's higher education institution, it brought forth the rise of academic entitlement behavior.

A curriculum of liberal arts was the foundation of study for "free men" due to the majority of occupations throughout Colonial America not requiring a college education to

garner employment (Kaye et al., 2006, p. 88). Instead, education was in place for men to embrace “the role of gentlemen and scholars (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 34). The curriculum throughout the Colonial era incorporated seven subjects composed of the original, two-level, liberal arts curriculum established by The Palace School more than 850 years earlier. The first level of curriculum, the “trivium” was focused on the study of language through “grammar, dialectic, and logic (Kaye et al., 2006, p. 88). The second level and second year of education, known as the “quadrivirium,” was comprised of arithmetic, astronomy, geometry, and music (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 35). Concentrating the curriculum on these subjects provided “occupational preparation” (p. 33) to a limited student population of future clergy, politicians, lawyers, and community leaders.

Although modeled after the institutions of England and Scotland, operational support of the colonial colleges was different. The universities of Great Britain received financial support from various government agencies whereas the colonial colleges relied on tuition payments from its student population (Thelin & Hirschy, 2009, p. 9). As a result, colonial (and later the United States) college administrators held two contradictory responsibilities to secure operational costs. Whereas administrators endorsed high academic standards and appropriate student behavior, they understood that the institution must be “attractive, competitive, and affordable” (Thelin & Hirschy, 2009, p. 10). This increase in competition during the late 18th century initiated the onset of a consumerist approach to higher education. Juxtaposed with the original institutions (those before

1769) in America which sought to provide a clerical and leadership education, schools now sought to meet the demands of its student population and its community.

Originally, access to higher education institutions throughout the Colonial period was limited to white males who could afford to pay tuition expenses. After the ratification of the United States Constitution, access to these institutions began to change. Institutions, recovering from the decline in enrollment during the American Revolution and War for Independence and responding to the need for an educated electorate to serve across the various factions of the new government, sought to establish their presence in aiding the development of the newly formed nation. Endorsing Jefferson's philosophy that public education's primary objective was to "prepare one for the rights and responsibilities of democratic citizenship," the newly formed nation sought to secure its future through an educated populace (Kaye et al., 2006, p. 90). During the years of the American Revolution, America experienced a growth of institutions to meet these needs, and by 1870, students had access to 500 bachelor-degree-granting institutions (Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007, p. 5).

The exponential increase experienced between 1770 and 1870 can be attributed not only to the won independence of the new nation, but also to the 1819 case *Dartmouth College v. Woodward*, a result of Dartmouth College's 1816 split into a private institution (Dartmouth College) and a public institution (Dartmouth University). Exhausting the New Hampshire judicial system, the Supreme Court overturned the state's ruling in which Dartmouth College was identified as a public institution. As a result of the ruling, higher education institutions were required to identify a status of private or

public. This decision expanded the access to higher education throughout the nation (Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007, p. 6).

However, even after the *Dartmouth College v. Woodward* case in 1819, institutions struggled to expand their student population. The 173 institutions identified in the 1840 census shared 16,233 students, with an average of 93 students per college (Hofstadter, 1952, as cited in Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 69). Even though the accessibility and availability was expansive, institutions “had to promise something to attract students,” ushering in the era of catalogues and marketing brochures. Identifying the unique qualities of the college and the successes of its alumni, institutions “touted the virtues of student life” and the positive benefits of the experience (p. 69). The public responded to the institution’s marketing strategies and the student population among the institutions increased to 120 students on average (Hofstadter, 1952, as cited in Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 69); however, inappropriate student behavior became present. Although institutions identified the rules and expectations of behavior, the call for order, which often included threats of suspension or expulsion, was often disregarded by the student population because it was widely known that “losing students was costly to the institution” (p. 74).

Following the Civil War, the institution of higher education the United States experienced the monumental effects of the Morrill Act of 1862 and the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890. However, establishing the foundations that would allow for such transformations did not come easily. A college education at this time was still considered to be “a luxury” (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 89). Nevertheless, Congressman Justin



Morrill of Vermont, an entrepreneur and former school dropout, was driven by a desire to educate the “industrial class” (Herren & Edwards, 2002, as cited in Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007, p. 7). Having gained the support of the U.S. Congress, the passage of the first Morrill Act, signed by President Lincoln on July 2, 1862, allowed the United States to become the first country in the world to dedicate federal resources toward the support and advancement of higher education (p. 7). The Morrill Act of 1862 granted each state 30,000 acres of land for each Congressional member recorded in the 1860 census. It then was the states’ prerogative to sell the land, creating a trust with the revenue to fund educational programs (Safransky, 2011).

With the passage of the 1862 Morrill Act, institutions of higher education were charged with bringing education to the communities of the United States. However, during the decades following the Civil War, in an effort to reverse the trend of declining enrollments, institutional administrators reduced admission standards when it was learned that an applicant could afford the tuition. Combatting the challenge to educate a population from communities that lacked high school education (e.g., rural communities), institutions began to admit students under conditional standards, requiring the completion of remedial courses, at an additional cost, to demonstrate one’s academic prowess (Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007, p. 7; Thelin & Hirschy, 2009, p. 11).

Connected to the technological evolution of the Industrial Revolution, for example, interest in a “mechanical curricula” (Sanfransky, 2011, para. 4) to aid in agricultural production and industrial advancement, Morrill authored a second educational act. Founded on the premise that higher education should be available in

every state providing academic access to those who “choose industrial vocations where the wealth of nations is produced” (Morrill, as cited in Rainsford, 1972, p. 102, as cited in Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007, p. 7), the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1890 renewed the first Morrill Act and aided in the creation of agricultural colleges and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) throughout the former Confederate States, further expanding the society’s accessibility to higher education. With the land and funding provided, further legislation required each state to expand its physical presence by constructing new buildings, preserve the classical curriculum (e.g., philosophy, sciences), and advance the programs, offering agricultural and mechanical arts (Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007, p. 8). This legislation allowed states to establish curricula that would meet the specific needs of the community, while remaining compliant to the Congressional regulations.

However, not all colleges or universities thrived. As Cohen and Kisker (2010) noted, the small size of the institution restrained its ability to offer an expansive curriculum and provide the supporting services needed to aid in academic success, such as science laboratories and academic libraries (p. 118). Although many institutions considered the addition of various graduate programs as the solution for expansion, critics simply advocated for an institution to close its doors if it could not “transform themselves into institutions with great breadth” (p. 118), stating that “the presence of the poor college is a weakness to the whole college system” (Thwing, 1910, p. 146, as cited in Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 118). Institutions responded to the criticism. Within 40 years, 15% of institutions that had a student population of 150 students or fewer had

transitioned to a junior college and another 40% had either joined another institution or closed completely (p.118). Wavering institutions that remained augmented their undergraduate curriculum, focused on “professional studies,” and underscored the option to take classes during the summer term or part-time enrollment (p. 118).

It was during the late 1800s and early 1900s that a college education aligned to “prestige and leverage,” and was imperative for “upward social and professional mobility” (Thelin & Hirschy, 2009, p. 11). The concentrated liberal arts curriculum no longer indicated the studies of free men, but rather attributed the studies to be those that would “free the mind” (Kaye et al., 2006, p. 93). During this time, education transitioned from an accessible luxury for the upper class to an expected opportunity for all. It is during this period of higher education that, with the expanded accessibility of higher education, society began to view education as a “right” (p. 93), which has brought forth the “problem of consumerism in higher education today” (p. 95).

Community colleges, a response to critics of limited accessibility and curriculum offerings, proved to be a “successful innovation” (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 120). These institutions championed the importance of the freshman and sophomore years of curriculum. Establishing their presence in the early 20th century, they gained tremendous ground due to the increasing need for skilled workers, the changing social norms of adolescents remaining under the care of their parents for a longer period of time, and the expanding access to higher education (Cohen, Brawer, & Kisker, 2014, p. 1).

With its hyper-focused attention to the freshman and sophomore years of higher education and the increasing number of higher education institutions within the United

States, questions regarding the true need for junior or community colleges emerged. State institutions could have, as Cohen et al. (2014) suggested, augmented their presence and function. However, recommendations from leading academicians of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggested that universities “abandon their freshman and sophomore classes and relegate the function of teaching adolescents to a new set of institutions.” The educators argued that until this action occurred, universities in the United States “would not become true research and professional development centers” (p. 6). Embracing this approach, community colleges, “developed outside the channel” (p. 6) of mainstream education and organized themselves as “upward extensions of secondary schools” (p. 8).

Various hypotheses suggest why community colleges grew at an exponential rate. Cohen et al. (2014) demonstrated that research suggested various catalytic factors to include the increasing percentage of high school graduates throughout the 20th century, the need for well-trained workers to support the various industries, and the central belief that schools, through education, were expected to solve the social and economic problems of the community. Historically, the United States has looked, for example, to schools to aid in the resolution of racial segregation and inequitable incomes, teach new approaches to highway safety through drivers’ education, or develop innovations to aid in eco-conscious living through newly developed “green” curriculums” (pp. 2–3, 8). Further research suggested that the growth of community colleges is in direct correlation to the cultural notions of the United States. As Cohen et al. (2014) noted, “publically supported schools became an article of American faith” (p. 3). It is a core component of the cultural

principle of the United States that “all individuals should have the opportunity to rise to their greatest potential” (p. 10).

Acceptance and enthusiasm of the community colleges’ demonstration of this opportunity at both the local and national level can be seen in their enrollment numbers. During the first decade of the 20th century, only twenty junior colleges existed (Koos, 1924, as cited in Cohen et al., 2014, p. 14). By 1922, 207 institutions, with a total enrollment of 20,000 were operational across thirty-seven of the forty-eight states within the country (pp. 14–15). By 1930, junior colleges held a national enrollment of 70,000 within 450 institutions found across all but five states within the United States (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 120). Although some institutions were specifically designed as “finishing schools for young women” who did not wish to attend a university, the mission of the majority of junior colleges was to serve its community. Students were to complete their freshman and sophomore years of schooling at their “home town” junior college and then transfer to a baccalaureate-degree granting institution” to complete their studies (pp. 120–121). Increasing the curriculum offerings specifically focused in various work-related areas, junior colleges evolved and took on a role of a “hybrid” institution in which students could either prepare for the junior and senior years of study or could prepare for employment after graduation (p. 121).

Reflecting the community accepted notion that a college education was needed for social and economic ascension and cultural civility, the 1947 report from the President’s Commission on Higher Education emphasized the importance of “access, quality, and democracy” (Gilbert & Heller, 2010, p. 1). The Commission’s six volume

report has been “celebrated and reviled” for its stance regarding higher education policy, guided by an explicit philosophy that supported accessibility of institutions (p. 1). In order to achieve such expansion, the Commission focused on accessibility through equality, increasing the responsibility of community colleges, and redefining the federal government’s role in higher education (p. 1)

In a post-World War II era, experiencing the rising global tensions caused by the Cold War, the Commission suggested the need for students of science and technology (Noftsinger & Newbold, 2007, p. 4), to aid in the application of “higher education as a means of fueling the nation’s economic engines” (Gilbert & Heller, 2010, p. 1). However, the Commission acknowledged that the expense of college was an impediment to access for many American families. Although expanded and equal accessibility was advocated, the Commission did not suggest that all students should receive the “same higher education opportunity” (Gilbert & Heller, 2010, p. 2). Rather, the Commission fully endorsed the community’s access to various forms of education “based on the skills, prior training, and capabilities students brought with them” (p. 2).

The limited accessibility noted by the Truman Commission was resolved as a result of various movements and acts of the latter 20th century. The Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly referred to as the G.I. Bill, was enacted prior to the Commission’s 1947 report, and afforded higher education accessibility for the United States veterans. The G.I. Bill aided in the limitation resolution, with seven million veterans utilizing the education benefits afforded to them. Twenty-nine percent attended college, helping the pre-war higher education enrollment to double following the Second

World War, further expanding higher education's accessibility (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, pp. 194–195).

Remaining in a Cold War environment, the United States considered the importance of accessibility to higher education a matter of national security. Beginning in 1958, one year after the launch of Soviet Union's satellite Sputnik, the National Defense Education Act (NDEA) granted funding for higher education students. The NDEA legislation permitted the funding of scholarships for students of the sciences, languages, and any “areas deemed critical for national defense.” Accessibility to the opportunity of higher education, as described in the NDEA legislation, had become “important to the security of the country” (Gilber & Heller, 2010, p. 5).

In addition to the noted political initiatives aligned to higher education accessibility, numerous social initiatives, including ending racial and religious discrimination and anti-feminism, have had tremendous impact on the general accessibility of higher education. Although it is debatable as to which event initiated the Civil Rights movement, strides towards equality made during the 1950s were the result of the initial pressures of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) placed upon legislatures throughout the 1930s and 1940s (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 195). Lawsuits fighting for equality within higher education surfaced during the 1950s, beginning with *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) and *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education* (1950). It was through the 1954 landmark case, *Brown v. Board of Education*, which overturned the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), that educational desegregation moved to the forefront of the American social

agenda. Though the Brown case was specifically aligned to primary education, the dissolution of ‘separate but equal’ stretched into higher education with the 1956 case, *Florida ex rel. Hawkins v. Board of Control* (pp. 195–196). In addition to the legal removal of racial discrimination within education, during the post-World War Two era, Karabel (2005) and Freeland (1992) noted the removal of religious affiliation identifiers on college applications (as cited in Gilbert & Heller, 2010, p. 5). Reinforcing the illegality of religious discrimination, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 also prohibited discrimination based upon gender. Specifically aligned to the financial aspects of higher education, the Higher Education Act of 1965 further sanctioned anti-discriminatory principles of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Throughout mid-1970s, numerous trends from the previous thirty years of higher education changed (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 307). Propelled by changing international and domestic environments, including the end of the Vietnam War, the intensifying Cold War relations, and a rising federal debt and federal budget, higher education became increasingly necessary for upward social movement and continued cultural civility of the community. Institutions responded by offering degrees in computer science, engineering technology, and business management (p. 421).

Maintaining their philosophy of open-access and a commitment to the community, responding to the social and economic needs of the time, junior colleges, known as community colleges since the 1970s, expanded their presence (Gilbert & Heller, 2010, p. 7). Throughout the 20th century community colleges continued to grow, with its enrollment eventually stabilizing during the 1980s. Although these institutions



only made up 13% of the total number of two-year institutions, according to the Carnegie Foundation (2010), they enrolled 60% of the total population of two-year institution students (as cited in Cohen, et al., 2014, p. 17). Community colleges continued to expand their presence and accessibility across the academic community by incorporating what Cohen et al. (2014) have noted as a “two-way stretch” (p. 22). In this effort, community colleges have pursued endeavors to work with students currently in the junior and senior year of high school, as well as expanding their reach into the baccalaureate realm. This movement to offer a full undergraduate curriculum has gained such momentum that it led the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education to create a new category in 2005. The new category, identified as the baccalaureate/associates colleges, as of 2010, has 147 identified institutions among 18 states (Carnegie Foundation, 2010, as cited in Cohen et al., 2014, p. 24). Though this new direction of community colleges brings with it both supporters and opponents, academic accessibility remained a cornerstone of their mission.

Throughout the latter part of the 20th century, the higher education landscape began to change with the exponential growth of for-profit institutions. According to Tierney (2011), fewer than 22,000 of the seven million students of degree-granting institutions in 1967 attended a for-profit institution. Degree-granting for-profit institutions, known then as “career” or “technical colleges” made up “less than one-third of one percent” of the total student population in the United States (p. 27). By 2010, the number of students attending a degree-granting for-profit institution has increased to

approximately 6.5% of total enrollment, nearly 1.2 million students (p. 28). Currently, the for-profit division is the “fastest growing sector in postsecondary education” (p. 28).

The University of Phoenix, a for-profit institution founded in 1976, became a major change agent within higher education. Now the United States’ second largest postsecondary institution, Phoenix began to “experiment with the meaning and purpose of higher education” (Tierney, 2011, p. 27). Phoenix looked on working adults as a new “customer base that traditional higher education had either ignored or disdained” (p. 27).

The political and economic environment of the 1970s also aided in perpetuating the growth of for-profit education. With the reauthorization and amendment of the Higher Education Act of 1965, students attending accredited for-profit institutions were allowed to receive student loans and grants through various federal financial aids (Beaver, 2009, p. 56). Prior to this amendment, the cost to attend an accredited for-profit institution may have been prohibitive for some students (Tierney, 2011, p. 28). Due to the benchmark of accreditation and the availability of federal financial aid the growth of the for-profit sector “would not have been anything akin to what it has been” (p. 28).

In the “name of equality” and accessibility, higher education institutions, similar to corporations and organizations, began to seek “proportional representation” throughout their student demographic (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 312). During this time, there was an increase in the enrollment of high school graduates, an increase of non-traditional students, and an increase in both male and female enrollments (pp. 420–421). However, with this increase in enrollment so too were demonstrations of “abandonment of individual

responsibility” throughout the higher education community during the latter twentieth century (pp. 313–314).

As a result of new financial and social legislation during the mid-1990s, it was expected that “individual responsibility and the free market” would remedy America’s challenges (Cohen & Kisker, 2010, p. 436). However, changes to the federal budget, an increasing unemployment rate, and the largest income inequity since the Great Depression changed the economic, political, and social environments of the United States and higher education responded. The number of institutions continued to grow. In 2005, the Carnegie Foundation identified more than 4,300 accredited nonprofit degree granting institutions. Additionally, there were more than 2,000 for-profit institutions. Throughout the first decade of the 21st century, with the increasing number of institutions, a decline in state resources, and an increase in the privatization of institutions and research, constricting pressure to recruit and retain students reflected a growing competition within the marketplace of higher education.

Clearly represented in the contemporary environment, the accessibility of higher education is expansive and has encouraged the populace’s understanding that they have a right to an education. However, as Kaye et al. (2006) stated, “having a right and being able to exercise that right are two different things. A ‘right’ means an entitlement; it does not mean the fulfillment of that entitlement” (p. 96). Seemingly, the objective of some students is now the tangible degree or record of high course marks, not the knowledge and skills gained throughout the educational experience.

Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) postulated that institutional “attempts to restructure pedagogical cultures and identities to comply with consumerist frameworks may unintentionally deter innovation, promote passive and instrumental attitudes to learning, threaten academic standards and further entrench academic privilege” (p. 267). By identifying students as customers higher education institutions have created an environment of entitlement which, as a result, has brought challenges to the academic arena (Cain et al., 2012, p. 1.). The consumerist approach is driven by multiple environmental variables. Szekeres (2010) asserted that the increase in the number of institutions has increased the competition for the potential enrollment, ultimately causing the students to see themselves as the target consumers in a highly competitive marketplace. Once enrolled, students may encounter twenty-first century facilities, student support services, and an institutional culture that stresses the importance of student feedback (Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, & Farruggia, 2008; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). As a result of these components, faculty have reported incidents of student incivility, a lack of responsibility (Greenberger et al., 2008; Kopp & Finney, 2013), and a greater focus on the grade, rather than the knowledge gained in the process (Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011; Tucker & Courts, 2010).

This concern regarding an embraced consumer philosophy resulting in student academic entitlement behavior is, however, not new in higher education. Riesman (1980) noted that clues of consumerist and entitlement behavior began during the late 1960s when “applicant pools were not large enough to permit a high degree of selectivity,” thus, the student “gained overwhelming political strength” (p. 9). It is this shift, from

“academic merit to student consumerism” that Clark Kerr, the former Chairperson of the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education (1974–1980), noted as “one of the two greatest reversals of direction in all the history of American higher education” (p. xxv). The other, Kerr identified, was the “replacement of the classical college by the modern university a century ago” (p. xxv).

In the decades following Reisman’s (1980) research, academicians reluctantly accepted the fact that academic entitlement behavior had breached the institution of higher education, and, in response, began to study the behavior. Delucchi and Smith (1997) provided the impetus suggesting that student consumerism, described as “faculty acquiescence to students’ demands,” “grades as a biasing factor in teaching evaluations,” and “grade obsession,” is a result of a “postmodernism” era (p. 322). Delucchi and Korgen (2002) followed up with a quantitative study of student consumerism, introducing the phrase “entitlement” as it applied to academic performance and expectations. Results of the study showed that more than 42% of the sample (N = 195) believed “that their payment of tuition ‘entitles’ them to a degree” (p. 104). It is at this time that the research community began to witness a shift in terminology. Although the phrase consumerism remained, entitlement dominated the vocabulary, as seen with Greenberger et al.’s (2008) study which utilized the “newly developed scale to assess ‘academic entitlement’ (AE)” (p. 1193). Suggested causes of this new phenomenon took a macro approach, looking at gender differences (Ciani et al., 2008), generational factors (Twenge, 2009), and the free-enterprise system’s breach into higher education (Szekeres, 2010). Correlational research addressed the relationship between academic entitlement and grade inflation (Boretz,

2004), demographics and social networking (Boswell, 2012), and learning styles (Andrey et al., 2012).

### **Evidence of the Problem at the Local Level**

Throughout the past two decades, being in the “business of education” has had an impact on the research site (personal communication, December 11, 2013). Noting a change in student conduct, which is reflective of an increase in academic entitlement behavior, some institutional faculty have indicated that an unquantified percentage of the student population displays a lack of effort and an unfamiliarity with their role as a student within the academic environment. Some members of this student population seek to gain “academic success without...personal responsibility” (Chowning & Campbell, 2009, p. 982). Expecting accommodations unrelated to the American with Disabilities Act of 1990, and recompenses in exchange for limited effort, it has been observed that these entitled students seek to acquire the benefit of those around them who put forth the required effort needed for academic success. Observed examples of such behavior included, but were not limited to, assumptions that the course instructor or professor would supply an absent student copious notes upon their return, provide the class with a list of hyper-focused examination topics, questions to aid in test preparation, and/or student requests to re-take tests when scores received were below the students’ expectations. Though perhaps less severe, but equally imposing behaviors that were observed included controlling behaviors such as entering class late, remaining unengaged during class time, and excessive class time disruptions.

With this increasing focus on student academic entitlement behavior within higher education, there is, however, a gap in the literature. Past research has primarily focused on the perspectives of the students and not on the perspectives of the faculty. Furthermore, the research site's faculty have yet to reach a consensus regarding their perceptions of the causes and implications of academic entitlement behavior. Additionally, there is nominal discussion regarding the actions of the institutional community to minimize the behavior. As a result, the purpose of this study is to determine what faculty perceive as the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior and identify strategies needed to curtail the behavior.

### **Context Definitions**

This study utilizes numerous terms in which the definition varies according to context. As a result, the following terms are defined in the context of this study:

*Academic entitlement:* Academic entitlement is “the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success” (Chowning & Campbell, 2009, p. 982). Singleton-Jackson et al. (2011) postulated beyond Chowning and Campbell's framework of diminished responsibility and have stated that entitled students expect faculty to go “beyond their obligation of providing educational opportunities and effective, quality instruction” (p. 232).

*Adult learner:* The National Center for Education Statistics (2012) identified adult learners as students who are twenty-five years old or older (para. 6).

*Andragogy:* Andragogy refers to the educational practices used to teach adult learners (Knowles, 1973, p. 43).

*Consumerism:* Consumerism, as presented by Kaye et al. (2006), is viewed as “the belief that individuals obtain gratification and social standing primarily through their purchase of commodities and consumption of tangible products.” In regards to higher education, these tangible products include, but are not limited to, passing marks, a diploma, or a pathway to employment or career opportunities (p. 86).

*Contrapower harassment:* A term defined by Benson (1984) to describe “a situation where a person with lesser power within an institution harasses an individual with greater power” (as cited in Lampman, Phelps, Bancroft, & Beneke, 2009, p. 331).

*Entitlement:* Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, and Bushman (2004) defined entitlement as “a stable and pervasive sense that one deserves more and is entitled to more than others” (p. 31). Similarly, Harvey and Martinko (2009) defined entitlement as a “phenomenon in which individuals consistently believe that they deserve preferential rewards and treatment, often with little consideration of actual qualities or performance levels” (p. 459).

*Generation Me:* Termed by Twenge (2009), Generation Me is equated to individuals born after 1980, characterized by an excessive demonstration of narcissistic behavior.

*Grade inflation:* Loffredo and Harrington (2012) defined the phenomenon of grade inflation as “the process of instructors assigning higher grades than is warranted” (p. 1).

*Millennial:* Millennial individuals were “born between 1981 and 1999” (Borges, Manuel, Elam, & Jones, 2010, p. 571). Synonymously termed “Generation Me” by



Twenge (2009) and Generation Y by Alexander and Sysko (2011), these individuals were raised in a culture that focused on the individual (p. 399)

*Student consumerism:* Cain et al. (2012) identified student consumerism as “the view that because students are paying for their education, they deserve to be treated as customers” (para. 5).

*Student incivility:* Student incivility within the higher education context is defined as “discourteous or disruptive verbal or nonverbal student behaviors enacted towards others” (Royce 2000, as cited in Burke et al., 2013, p. 2).

*Traditional student:* The traditional student is between the age of eighteen and twenty-four (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is threefold. First, the study chronicles the evolutionary alignment between the accessibility of America’s higher education system and student academic entitlement behavior. Second, the study adds to the collection of literature regarding student academic entitlement behavior, but is unique in its focus as it addresses faculty perceptions of the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior. Finally, the practical application of this study is significant, resulting in a position paper in which approaches to curtail student academic entitlement behavior are provided and possibly considered by the research site’s administration. The combined multilayered significance of this study adheres to Walden University’s attention to social change by identifying causes and implications of potentially damaging academic entitlement behavior and recommended strategies to decrease such behavior,

allowing the academic communities of higher education to return to a learning-focused environment.

### **Guiding Research Questions**

As a result of the increase in observed student academic entitlement behavior, this study, which is exploratory and descriptive in nature, is to determine what faculty perceive as the causes and implications of academic entitlement behavior and identify strategies needed to curtail the behavior. Applying Morrow's (1994) conceptual framework that suggested when "entitlement presupposes achievement," (p. 35) valid achievement in a learning environment is threatened. Referencing the experiences and perceptions of faculty (full-time and adjunct), this qualitative study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do faculty define student academic entitlement behavior?
2. What do faculty perceive as the cause(s) of student academic entitlement behavior?
3. What do faculty identify as the implication(s) of student academic entitlement behavior?
4. From the perspective of the faculty, what is needed from the institutional community to curtail student academic entitlement behavior?

### **Review of the Literature**

The literature review is an amalgamation of past academic research in which student academic entitlement behavior was the primary construct. It includes the conceptual framework that supports this study, definition information regarding student

academic entitlement behavior, and recent academic studies that suggest influential causational factors of the behavior. The literature review was initiated in the Walden University Library's Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, ERIC, and SAGE Premier databases using a broad search of *academic entitlement behavior*. Searches limiters and Boolean phrases were applied to subsequent keyword searches to focus the results. Limiting keywords included *narcissism*, *consumerism*, and *generation*. Particular attention was also placed on monographs which focused on the construct. The literature review concluded when authors and studies were referenced repeatedly and a saturation of the research had been reached.

Student academic behavior is the possible by-product of various catalytic factors which include an institutional response to an increased competition market place (Finney & Finney, 2010; Lippmann et al., 2009; Szekeres, 2010) or multiple aspects of socio-cultural factors (Boswell, 2012; Cain et al., 2012; Twenge, 2009). Though remaining neutral to the potential cause of the behavior, Chowning and Campbell (2009) have defined academic entitlement as "the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success" (p. 982). As a result of these factors affecting student behavior, student incivility, a lack of responsibility (Kopp & Finney, 2013), and grade inflation (Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011; Tucker & Courts, 2010) have risen, ultimately compromising the overall learning experience (Cain et al., 2012; Morrow, 1994; Schaefer et al., 2013).

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual model that frames this study is Morrow's (1994) exploration that suggested when "entitlement presupposes achievement," (p. 35) valid achievement in a learning environment is threatened. Morrow (1994) asserted that "it is incoherent to 'delegitimize' or repudiate educational or academic achievements in the name of educational entitlement" (p. 46). Self-constructed opinions of entitled learners result in the belief that any students' failure is a direct result of the institution, the curriculum, or the faculty (p. 33). When entitled learners identify themselves as a "consumer," Morrow stated that it is doubtful that the learner will "achieve epistemological access" (p. 41). Rather than the learner developing "respect for the practice in which [they are] trying to become a participant," they view the learning experiences as an "antagonistic" environment, with an overly critical teacher at the helm "expressing their personal prejudices" toward the learner when recording a less than perfect score on an assignment (p. 42).

Although Morrow (1994) focused on the psychological and cultural effects of Apartheid education, his assertion that an entitlement behavior negatively affects learning is applicable. Morrow (1994) suggested that it is not only the responsibility of the faculty to help propel the student forward in the academic pursuit, but that the responsibility lay in the hands of the student and the institutional community. This is likened to a "learner centered institution" in which every member of the institutional community is responsible for the students' successes (Barr & Tagg, 1995; O'Banion, 2009). Ultimately, the stakeholders become engrossed in a community of accountability in which each member

understands and acknowledges their role and responsibility to bring about academic enrichment. Due to the challenges presented when students demonstrate behaviors of entitlement (Morrow, 1994) and a higher education institution's core mission of learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995; O'Banion, 2009), this study is relevant as it seeks to understand what faculty perceive as the cause of academic entitlement behavior, its implications, and the needed strategies to curtail the behavior.

Within the past two decades, studies of entitlement behavior have surfaced within academic research (Boretz, 2004; Ciani et al., 2008; Delucchi & Smith, 1997; Edmundson, 1997; Finney & Finney, 2010; Kopp & Finney, 2013; Lippmann et al., 2009; Morrow, 1994). The research has brought about a plethora of definitions regarding student entitlement behavior. Generalized as a "breakdown in the culture of learning," Morrow (1994) defined the perceived entitlement culture within higher education as students viewing their "epistemological access" as a product that can be "bought or sold" rather than an experience in which they must be an active participant (p. 34 & 40). Lippmann et al. (2009) subscribed to Morrow's (1994) framework correlating an economic exchange for academic gain. Taking a more general view of academic entitlement, Chowning and Campbell (2009) defined student academic entitlement behavior as "the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success" (p. 982). Singleton-Jackson et al. (2011) concurred with Chowning and Campbell's assumption regarding the diminishment of responsibility. They further posited that entitled students expect faculty to go "beyond their obligation of providing educational opportunities and effective,

quality instruction” (p. 232). Schaefer et al. (2013) described academic entitlement behavior as a psychological and social belief in which some students present “me-centric attitudes” which are sourced from “an automatic unrestricted right” to demand immediate fulfillment of a “want,” even if fulfillment results in the “bending or dismissal of rules” (p. 80). For the purpose of this study, aspects of academic entitlement behavior, diminished responsibility and increased expectations of faculty, will serve as the cornerstone definitions of academic entitlement.

Contemporary research demonstrates that student academic entitlement behavior is present in today’s higher education environment (Boretz, 2004; Ciani et al., 2008; Delucchi & Smith, 1997; Edmundson, 1997; Finney & Finney, 2010; Kopp & Finney, 2013; Lippman et al., 2009; Morrow, 1994). However, there is not a consensus among today’s academicians and researchers regarding the cause of academic entitlement behavior. Much research supports the adoption of a “customer-business” model (Finney & Finney, 2010; Riesman, 1980; Schaefer et al., 2013, p. 80; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010 & 2011) as a cause of academic entitlement behavior in students. Additional research considers generational characteristics of the student population as the primary driver of academic entitlement behavior (Cercione, 2008; Greenberger et al., 2008; Kasworm, 2010; Ross-Gordon, 2011; Twenge, 2009; Worley 2011).

### **Consumerism as a Catalytic Factor of Academic Entitlement Behavior**

Increasingly, students are being viewed as consumers of an “experience” or customers within the framework of a general business transaction, and, as a result, this changing view is ultimately affecting the environment of higher education (Edmunson,

1997; Sosteric et al., 1998, as cited in Lippmann et al., 2009, p. 199). When identified as “customers,” some students believe that they are “entitled to considerations and concessions” that would traditionally be found in a “retail business model” (Schaefer et al., 2013, p. 80). Furthermore, Szekeres (2010) asserted that due to increased competition for student enrollments throughout the past decade, institutions have employed new marketing and recruiting techniques to maintain their appeal to their primary demographic, while tapping into new demographics (p. 429). This belief commonly carries with it the general implication that the “customer is always right” (Schaefer et al., 2013, p. 80), ultimately causing additional challenges noted throughout anecdotal and empirical research.

In 2011, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching reported the addition of 483 “newly classified institutions in the 2010 Classifications,” bringing the total number of American higher education institutions to 4,633 (Updated, 2011, para. 3). According to Chun-Mei Zhao, a research scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, the increase in institutions ““that tend to be less selective and non-residential”” reflects a change in the ““higher education landscape...away from the traditional model”” (Updated, 2011, para. 2). However, this change is not only affecting “less selective” institutions. It is also predicted that “universities would ‘change dramatically’ as students regained power in an expanding marketplace” (Lewin, 2011, as cited in Snyder, 2011, para. 4). Zhao’s position is reinforced by Rudd and Mills’ (2008) research which demonstrated that due to the declining student population and the

oversaturation of the market it is “impossible” for institutions to remain hyper-selective when reviewing the applicant pool and extending invitations for admission (p. 44).

Historically, students of higher education have been identified as the receivers of information (Reisman, 1980). However, today, as a result of the increased competition, students are often viewed consumers of a “commodity” (Kaye et al., 2006, p. 86). The “commodity” of higher education includes every aspect of the experience, which can include, but is not limited to, the marketing concepts, the available facilities, course grades, and ultimately the diploma. Schaefer et al. (2013) posited that when grounded in a student-customer environment the “quid pro quo transaction” reflects “tuition in exchange for a degree rather than tuition in exchange for the introduction to knowledge and the opportunity to learn, understand, and practice said knowledge” (p. 80). Morrow (1994) further demonstrated that when this paradigm exists a culture of “entitlement presupposes achievement...to the extent that the culture of entitlement undermines, “delegitimizes” or excludes the concept of education achievement” (p. 35). Ultimately, the student-customer philosophy “is diametrically opposed to the proven and successful education student academic model” (Schaefer et al., 2013, p. 81).

Absher and Crawford (1996) suggested that, historically, colleges and universities “enjoyed a seller’s market” (para. 1; Harrison-Walker, 2010, para. 1). However, the increased competition experienced during the latter part of the twentieth century transformed the environment from a “seller’s market” to a “buyer’s market” (Finder, 2008, para. 3; Harrison-Walker, 2010, para. 1). Due to the increased competition for student enrollments throughout the past decade, institutions have increased their



marketing presences and have employed new marketing and recruiting techniques to maintain their appeal to their primary demographic, all the while tapping into new demographics (Szekeres, 2010, p. 429). Unique to higher education, Rudd and Mills (2008) suggested the application of the “9 P’s” of higher education marketing to utilize techniques that attract the “customer” to the “intangibility” of education as a product (Rudd & Mills, 2008, p. 45 & 50). To “address the service characteristics of higher education, the “9 P’s” incorporate the four traditional “P’s” of product marketing, “product, price, place, and promotion,” and expand further to include “packaging, partnership, programming, positioning, and people” (p. 41).

These additional elements allow institutions to address what Brooks and Hammons (1993) identified as distinctive traits within “service-oriented businesses” (as cited in Rudd & Mills, 2008, p. 43). Education is an “intangible” service. Knowledge gained, Brooks and Hammons argued, cannot be “touched, felt, or held” (as cited in Rudd & Mills, 2008, p. 43). In addition, the students’ motivating factors to attend the institution and remain an active member of the institution’s community are multifaceted. These varying factors align to the essential understanding that there is diversity within the student experience; no two students will have the same experience (Rudd & Mills, 2008, p. 43). Finally, institutions maintain that their services are “perishable.” Rudd and Mills (2008) explained that if an incoming class has a capacity of two thousand students, but only fifteen hundred students are enrolled, it is impossible “to sell those same seats a year later” (p. 43).

When taking into consideration academic ability, experience, and motivation, Woo and Fock (2004), acknowledging that no two students are alike, suggested that institutional marketing strategies must maintain close alignment to the institutions' mission (as cited in Harrison-Walker, 2010, p. 195). Identified as "right customers," "wrong customers," and "at-risk right customers," Woo and Fock (2004) maintained that if institutions marketed to an undefined prospective student population there is an increased chance of "incompatible behaviors" among the admitted student population (as cited in Harrison-Walker, 2010, p. 200). These "incompatible behaviors" of some students may include a lack of preparation, engagement, and understanding of their role as a student. When demonstrated, these behaviors result in the student expecting others within the institutional community, including classmates, faculty, and staff, to "carry a disproportional share of the work" to gain success (Harrison-Walker, 2010, p. 200). Countering the purpose of effective marketing, a high percentage of "incompatible behaviors" ultimately endangers retention due to "lower student satisfaction" rates (Harrison-Walker, 2010, p. 200).

As "paying customers," institutions now consider students as vital sources of satisfaction feedback, effectively becoming "drivers of organizational change" (Finney & Finney, 2010, p. 276). Since the 1970s, empirical studies have focused directly on the students' perceptions of the classroom environments, knowledge gained, and faculty members' instructional paradigm (Culver, 2010; Lo, 2010). Bruce and Edgington (2008) noted the increasing utilization of student surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the

majority of “educational services” across the institutional community (as cited in Harrison-Walker, 2010, p. 194).

One such tool that attempts to measure the effectiveness of institutional services is the end of course survey. Utilized by 98% of institutions (Magner, 1997, as cited in Harrison-Walker, 2010, p. 194), the end of course survey invites students to provide insight “on their own perceptions of learning and of the effectiveness of the learning environment” (Lo, 2010, pp. 47–48). As “participant observers in classrooms” and a central stakeholder in their educational experience, Culver (2010) suggested that students are well positioned to provide feedback regarding their classroom experience, which, as a collective source of data, affords the faculty and the institution a tremendous amount of information (p. 334).

Though it is the student that completes the end of course evaluations, Howell and Buck (2012) suggested that there are external variables impacting the students’ classroom experience, which, in turn could potentially affect the given responses. The classroom experience primarily includes the faculty member and the student; however, factors such as the faculty member’s “competency, approach to classroom management” and level of engagement impact the students’ perceptions (Howell & Buck, 2012, p. 216). Furthermore, the individual student’s experience is influenced by his or her own peers and the student’s personal effort level and expectations. Finally, Howell and Busk (2012) posited that institutional decisions, including class size, location, and the type of faculty, full-time or adjunct, are all impacting variables with potentials to influence the results of end of course surveys (p. 216).

Research has found that using faculty evaluations to assess the “service quality of an education” negatively affects “academic standards” (Emery, Kramer, & Tian, 2001; Sacks, 2000, as cited in Harrison-Walker, 2010, p. 194). Birnbaum (2000) determined that 65% of the faculty surveyed at Western University believed that “higher educational standards in class would lower student evaluations” (as cited in Harrison-Walker, 2010, p. 194). Clayson and Haley’s (1990) study demonstrated that students understood that a challenging course would afford them the opportunity to learn more information, but that the intense content would negatively impact their review of their teacher (as cited in Harrison-Walker, 2010, p. 194). Howell and Buck’s (2012) research suggested that “student workload” that is “too demanding” is one of four variables that has the potential to negatively impact reported student satisfaction levels (p. 225). The additional three variables include “relevancy of subject matter, faculty subject matter competency, [and] general classroom management” (p. 222).

Kaye et al. (2006) suggested that the correlation between the “commodification of education” and the consumerist mindset, which accentuates the “market value” of higher education, is strong throughout the higher education environment (p. 86 & 87). In regard to higher education, customer students often approach their university experience as a common “economic exchange,” shaping their views about the “classroom experience” and are failing to acknowledge the “intrinsic ‘use-value’” of the educational experience (Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005, p. 271). As a result of this consumerist perception, some students have distorted their role and responsibility within the higher education environment. Perceiving themselves as a customer, anecdotal and empirical

evidence confirms that some students expect a disproportionate level of responsibility to that of their teachers and a distorted understanding of their role as a student. It has been observed that some students in today's classroom have demonstrated "a general disregard for traditional faculty relationship boundaries and authority" (Lippmann et al., 2009, p. 198). Because the "entitlements assume that someone other than the potential beneficiary must supply whatever is needed for the fulfillment of the entitlement" (Morrow, 1994, p. 78), the student learning experience is challenged.

It is acknowledged that institutions must have a student population and charge tuition in order to survive and this economic exchange is one that should result in experience and knowledge. As Brooks and Hammons (1993) noted, education is a service; however, it is an "intangible" service (as cited in Rudd & Mills, 2008, p. 43). Some higher education students have adopted the "shopper" mentality due to the belief that "tuition makes you a customer," as opposed to embracing the "scholar" mentality (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010, p. 354). It is this perception of a student as a customer that has aided in the rise of "entitlement in higher education" (p. 354).

### **Generational Characteristics as a Catalytic Factor of Academic Entitlement Behavior**

In addition to its attention regarding the correlation between consumerism within higher education and academic entitlement behavior, research has also focused on a second potential cause of academic entitlement behavior. The correlational paradigm between academic entitlement behavior and generational characteristics originated from an increase in observed narcissistic behaviors and gained momentum from the research of

Twenge (2009; see also Alexander & Sysko, 2011; Arnett, 2013; Bergman et al., 2010; Burke et al., 2013; Greenberger et al., 2008; Kopp & Finney, 2013; Lippmann et al., 2009; Westerman, Bergman, Bergman, & Daly, 2010). Focused specifically on the early 21st century traditional higher education student (18–24 years old), Twenge (2009) asserted that “different generations clearly have different perspectives” on societal events (p. 399). The perspectives of these “digital natives” have always included a world with the Internet and cell phones and maintains the perception that a “tablet is no longer something you take in the morning” (Beloit College, 2013, para. 1 & para. 5).

Coupled with this continual presence of technology, a decade old “psychological shift” towards individual and immediate personal attention, technology users of the twenty-first century, which include higher education students, expect immediate response, involvement, and gratification (Twenge, 2009, pp. 399; 400–401). Born after 1980 and identified by Twenge (2009) as “Generation Me” (pp. 398 & 399), these Millennial students bring with them hedonistic behaviors and “an inflated sense of self” (Arnett, 2013, p. 6), as well as a “cavalier work ethic” that is displayed only if there is an “immediate reward and recognition” (Alexander & Sysko, 2011, p. 1). This “sense of immediacy” displayed by the students has impacted and altered “the norms of social interaction” between the student and faculty, resulting in a student demonstration of academic entitlement behavior (Lippmann et al., 2009, p. 198).

The Millennial generation may not know any different since they were raised during the “self-esteem movement” (Branden, 1969, as cited in Kopp & Finney, 2013, p. 322). This generation of students was taught that a high self-esteem brought with it

success. Either raised by “baby boomer ‘helicopter parents’ or Generation X ‘stealth fighter parents,” the “Generation Me” students have possibly been raised in an “overprotective” environment” or afforded continuous commendation for insufficient work (Burke et al., 2013, p. 16). Accolades were disseminated for “minor achievements” (Kopp & Finney, 2013, p. 323). This belief was reinforced by teachers that would do anything within their power to strengthen their students’ self-esteem, which resulted in insignificant awards making their way into the classroom. This consequence, Moses and Moses-Hrushovski (1990) theorized would manifest itself in as “an exaggerated sense of entitlement” (as cited in Kopp & Finney, 2013, p. 323). Today, having been raised in an environment in which they were given a trophy or ribbon for simply showing up, the Millennial generation are now college students and some “expect their professors to glorify ordinary feats” (Burke et al., 2013, p. 16).

A product of the “American culture [which] teaches that one must be self-confident to be successful,” research has shown that these Millennial students are perhaps too confident, and thus fail to identify behaviors that are in need of improvement or mindsets that would benefit from an adjustment (Twenge, 2009, p. 400-401). Reynolds, Stewart, MacDonald, and Sischo’s (2006) study of the academic and professional goals of high school seniors between 1976–2000 found that the gap between the “heightened ambition” and achievements earned is widening (p. 186). Demonstrated through the analysis of historical data collected by numerous survey instruments (Monitoring the Future, Digest of Education Statistics), historical studies (National Longitudinal Study, High School and Beyond Study, and the National Educational Longitudinal Study), and

national databases (National Center for Education Statistics), Reynolds et al. (2006) suggested that the academic plans of high school seniors have “dramatically increased” (p. 194). For example, an analysis of the completed surveys reflected that three-fourths of Millennial high school seniors anticipated earning a bachelor’s degree and more than fifty percent of them planned on pursuing graduate school, a dramatic increase from the seniors of 1976. However, conferred degrees have not increased in alignment (p. 195).

In addition to the increase of over-confidence within the Millennial generation, Twenge and Campbell (2009) posited that narcissistic behaviors are also on the rise (p. 13). Twenge’s (2009) evaluation of Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) completed between 1982 and 2006 noted an increase in narcissistic tendencies, citing that, in 1982, one out of seven respondents identified a tendency towards narcissistic behavior, while one in four of the 2006 respondents identified a tendency towards narcissistic behavior (p. 401). Twenge (2009) further suggested that because entitlement behavior is an aspect of narcissism and there has been a reported increase in narcissism, a correlational increase in entitlement behavior should be observed (p. 401; Menon & Sharland, 2011, p. 50 & p. 54). Greenberger et al.’s (2008) study supported this position. Utilizing the Academic Entitlement assessment, Greenberger et al. (2008) determined that one-third (33.4%) of undergraduate students, ranging in age from 18 to 25 years, assumed that they should receive a course grade of “at least a B” just for showing up for class (p. 1196). Further evidence reported that two-thirds (66.2%) of undergraduate students believe that they should receive special consideration for graded assignments for “trying hard” and



forty-percent of undergraduate students believed that they should earn a B for completing the majority of the course reading assignments (p. 1196).

Students who approach their academic goals with such behaviors and philosophies ultimately expect the institution to produce their academic achievements rather than acknowledge and accept their responsibility to earn their own academic successes (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010, p. 346). This breach of accountability damages the academic goal of learning (Lombardi, 2007, as cited in Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010, p. 343; Morrow, 1994).

Twenge's (2006) classification of "Generation Me" generated interest in regards to the generational correlation to current human behavior, with a specific focus on narcissistic tendencies and increased self-esteem (see also Alexander & Sysko, 2011; Bergman et al., 2010; Greenberger et al., 2008; Menon & Sharland, 2011). However, research has emerged challenging the noted increase in narcissistic tendencies (Arnett, 2013; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008a; Trzesniewski, Donnellan, & Robins, 2008b). Analyzing the data collected from the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), the same forty item forced-choice instrument utilized throughout Twenge's research, Trzesniewski et al. (2008a) found no indication that there has been an increase in narcissistic tendencies (p. 184). The considered reasons for the variances within the results include differing sample sizes and selected analysis approach (p. 185). Trzesniewski et al. (2008b) specifically noted concerns in regards to Twenge's use of a "cross-temporal meta-analysis" and the use of convenience sampling (p. 904).

In addition to Trzesniewski et al.'s. (2008a; 2008b) challenges, Arnett (2013)

suggested that the issue of concern should be directed to the population and the chosen instrument. Noting evidence of confidence and high-expectations within “emerging adults,” Arnett (2013) challenged Twenge’s population of only college students who attend a four-year institution, failing to measure community college students, vocational students, or young adults that elected to enter the workforce after high school (p. 6). “Emerging adults,” Arnett (2013) argued, are in a unique stage of life in which confidence and a willingness to achieve are tools needed to succeed, rather than a component of narcissistic tendencies that present challenges within other areas of life (p. 5). From a holistic perspective, Arnett (2013) questioned the intent of the NPI to effectively measure narcissism. This challenge regarding effective measurement approaches is not unique. Ackerman et al. (2011) also noted that there are discrepancies among researchers when determining the most effective approach to employ when interpreting the NPI scores (p. 81). Rather than using the total NPI score, Ackerman et al. (2011) recommended application of a “three-factor” analysis of the “Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, and Entitlement/Exploitativeness” subsets for a more precise assessment and measurement of narcissistic tendencies (p. 82).

Historically, the focus of generational behavior tendencies is concentrated primarily on the traditional student population (Alexander & Sysko, 2011; Arnett, 2013; Bergman et al., 2010; Burke et al., 2013; Greenberger et al., 2008; Kopp & Finney, 2013; Lippmann et al., 2009; Westerman et al., 2010). However, the enrollments of adult learners (age 25 and older) are projected to increase 20% by 2020, a growth greater than the projected eleven percent increase for the traditional student population (National

Center for Education Statistics, 2012, para. 6). Consequentially, Burns (2011) noted that it is imperative to acknowledge the adult learner as a “change agent” in higher education. Recently, generational research has begun to consider the behavior and expectations of the adult learners as important variables in decision making (Cerccone, 2008; The Council For Adult & Experiential Learning (CAEL), 2010; Kasworm, 2010; Ross-Gordon, 2011).

Ross-Gordon (2011) observed that within recent decades institutions have been specifically designed with the adult learner in mind (para. 4). Embracing various adult learning concepts, some institutions are redesigning their curriculum to ensure that they “meet the needs of adult students” (Cerccone, 2008, p. 138). The encouragement or application of various methodologies and philosophies are present throughout current research (Cerccone, 2008; CAEL, 2010; Kasworm, 2010; Ross-Gordon, 2011). The assumptions of andragogy underwrite many of the employed methodologies and philosophies. Popularized by the research of Malcom Knowles, andragogy is the “art and science of helping adults learn” (Cerccone, 2008, p. 137). According to Knowles (1973), andragogy includes the following assumptions of the adult learner: (a) the adult learner has a growing level of their “self-concept”; (b) the experiences of an adult learner are valued and should be referenced and built upon during the learning experience; (c) the adult learner is “ready to learn” to meet their social and economic responsibilities to society; and (d) adult learners desire “problem-centered” orientation to learning as opposed to “subject-centered orientation” (pp. 45–49). Knowles identified a fifth assumption regarding the adult learners’ motivation in his later research (Knowles, 1984, p. 12). Knowles’ “conceptual framework” of andragogy (as cited in Merriam, 2001, p.

5), which embraces self-directed learning, experiential learning, and transformative learning, is often recommended for application in both the online and residential classrooms of adult learners (Cercone, 2008, pp. 147–149).

In addition to the methodological adjustment within the curriculum, significant modifications have been made throughout other institutional departments (Plageman, 2011; Ross-Gordon, 2011). Recognizing the societal need for a well-educated workforce and the growing population of adult learners, institutions have committed resources to ensure that the needs of their adult learners are met. Plageman (2011) noted that institutions have made substantial modifications to their admissions policies to be “more user friendly for the adult learner population” (p. 33). Additional institutional changes made to support the potential adult learner include changes to the program offerings (Plageman, 2011, p. 33), accelerated course formats (Ross-Gordon, 2011, para. 9), the acceptance of Prior Learning Assessment, including credits from Advanced Placement curriculum and the American Council on Education’s evaluation of industry or military training (CAEL, 2010, p. 7), and the realignment of the “undergraduate mission and environment” to support a diverse student population, specifically an undergraduate student population that includes the “adult undergraduate” (Kasworm, 2010, p.144).

### **Implications of Academic Entitlement Behavior**

As a result of perceived academic entitlement behaviors, researchers have turned their focus towards the implications of the behavior. One approach focused on the rise of “disruptive and uncivil student behaviors” in both academic and non-academic university environments (Kopp & Finney, 2013, p. 323). A second approach focused on the

academic impact of academic entitlement behavior, specifically addressing the growing concern of grade inflation (Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011; Tucker & Courts, 2010).

### **Student Incivility**

Empirical research regarding student incivility across the various academic disciplines within institutions of higher education has increased (Burke et al., 2013, p. 2). One study reported that 96% of female faculty and 99% of male faculty have experienced at least one action of student incivility (Lampman et al., 2009). Student incivility within the higher education context is defined as “discourteous or disruptive verbal or nonverbal student behaviors enacted towards others” (Royce, 2000, as cited in Burke et al., 2013, p. 2). To address the observed range in behavior intensity, Feldmann (2001) identified a four category continuum of uncivil actions. Concurrence of Feldmann’s continuum was demonstrated in later research through the utilization of the student incivility spectrum (Alberts, Hazen, & Theobald, 2010; Baker, Comer, & Martinak, 2008; Burke et al., 2013; Clark & Springer, 2007).

Feldmann (2001) noted that annoyances, or low intensity behaviors, included general classroom etiquette (e.g., using the phone during class, arriving late or leaving early, or inappropriate appearance). These annoyances, in a collection, will “slowly chip away at the learning environment” (p. 137). Alberts et al. (2010) found that over three-fourths (75.8%) of faculty experienced these annoyances or “disrespectful behaviours” (p. 446). It is the annoyances or “low intensity” acts of incivilities that are mentioned most often throughout the literature (Burke et al., 2013, p. 5; see also Baker et al., 2008; Clark & Springer, 2007, Lampman et al., 2009).

The next level on the continuum, classroom “terrorism,” can impact the overall instruction and learning experience. Such behaviors include inappropriate challenges to classmates’ opinions or attempting to control or dominate the classroom environment. Lampman et al. (2009) found that more than three-fourths (76.1%) of the study’s participating faculty reported that students had asked that the assignments or exams were lessened in intensity. More than two-thirds of the faculty (67.5%) reported experiences of a student’s continual interruptions during class (p. 338).

Moving closer to high intensity behaviors, Feldmann (2001) noted intimidating behaviors as those that include students’ threats to complain about the teacher to members of the administration or provide an intensely vindictive evaluation of the faculty member. The students’ goal of intimidation is intended specifically to “pressure” (p. 138) the teacher. Alberts et al. (2010) study found that over twenty percent (21.3%) of the faculty reported having experienced hostile actions from a student (p. 446). More specifically, Lampman et al. (2009) found that 47.1% of the reported faculty noted receiving “inappropriate or hostile comments on course evaluations,” and more than one-fourth reported that students had “violated their personal space (25.7%)” or “yelled or screamed at them (29.1%)” (p. 338).

The final and most intense category describing student incivility are threats or actions of violence towards classmates or the teacher. Although physical threats are often perceived as the primary element of the fourth category, Feldmann (2001) also noted that psychological attacks are a “direct assault” on the faculty member (p. 138). Lampman et al. (2009) found that 21.9% of their surveyed faculty had their credentials challenged by

an aggressive student (p. 338). Though reports of threats or violent actions are limited within literature, Lashley and de Meneses' (2001) study found that almost one quarter of the participants (24.8%) had been "physically assaulted by students" and 42.8% had been verbally abused by a student in a classroom environment (as cited in Robertson, 2012, p. 22).

Literature sources provide various causes of student incivility behavior. Kerr, Johnson, Gans, and Krumrine (2004) suggested that the experienced social and academic changes of first-year students may initiate uncivil behaviors. The adjustment from the high school academic expectations to the university or college level expectations could cause anxiety and a fear of failure in students, causing actions of incivility. Lampman et al. (2009) focused on "contrapower harassment," a term defined by Benson (1984) to describe "a situation where a person with lesser power within an institution harasses an individual with great power" (as cited in Lampman et al., 2009, p. 331). Perceived and perhaps unconscious prejudices regarding age, sex, social status, professional experience, or physical appearance from one person to another results in student incivility and bullying behaviors among the faculty-student interaction (p. 333). Research also identified the role of the faculty member in enabling actions of student incivility (Alberts, et al., 2010; Clark & Springer, 2007). Braxton and Bayer (1999) suggested that faculty behaviors including "condescending negativism, inattentive planning...particularistic grading, personal disregard, uncommunicated course details, and uncooperative cynicism" could possibly incite student incivility (p. 21, as cited in Alberts et al., 2010, p. 440). As one student noted in Clark and Springer's (2007) study, "incompetent, rude

professors encourage the same rude behavior from students” (p. 96). Finally, and aligned to the current study, research also suggested the correlation of student incivility and consumerism (Clark & Springer, 2007) and the correlation between student incivility and generational causes (Baker et al., 2008).

Nordstrom, Bartels, and Bucy (2009) suggested that an endorsed consumerism philosophy within higher education is a “potential predictor of uncivil classroom behavior (para. 7). If students identify themselves as customers as opposed to learners, their focus then rests in the institution meeting and perhaps exceeding all of their expectations (e.g., grades, instructional paradigm) (Clark & Springer, 2007; Delucchi & Smith, 1997; Nordstrom et al., 2009). As a result of this consumerism mentality, the students could assume that they are “entitled to act in whatever manner they choose” Nordstrom et al., 2009, para. 7). Consequently, because they are “paying customers,” some students are of the opinion that “they can be as rude as they want” (Clark & Springer, 2007, p. 96).

Baker et al. (2008) suggested generational causes of student incivility within the traditional student demographic. Referencing Strauss and Howe’s (2007) description of the parenting philosophies and methodologies of the Baby Boomer “helicopter parents” and the Generation X “stealth fighter parents” that include hovering, excessive praise for minute accomplishments, and a demand to find economic or social value in nearly every activity, Baker et al. (2008) suggested that the children of the Baby Boomers and Generation X have essentially been taught such behavior (pp. 68–69). Resultantly, some students may perceive such behavior “appropriate” (Nordstrom et al., 2009, para. 5).



## **Grade Inflation**

Coupled with evidence of student incivility, research also suggested that grade inflation is a potential side-effect of student entitlement behavior (Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011; Boretz, 2004; Kuh & Hu, 1999). Defined as “the process of instructors assigning higher grades than is warranted” (Loffredo & Harrington, 2012, p. 1), grade inflation has been a focus of research since the 1960s. Throughout the past fifty years, research has shown that there is a “nationwide rise in grades over time of roughly 0.1 change in GPA per decade” (Rojstaczer & Healy, 2010, para. 1).

Research, however, varied regarding the impacting phenomena’s correlation to grade inflation. Baer and Cheryomukhin (2011) suggested that some students who are focused on grades that are no less than an A amplify their demands upon their teachers. This approach is suggested to be a coping response to the stress that often accompanies the pursuit of higher education (p. 565). Loffredo and Harrington (2012) demonstrated that age could serve as a contributing factor in regards to grade inflation. Tucker and Courts (2010) suggested an association between grade inflation and environment of fear, as it is related to faculty members’ “academic career” (p. 48). Critical feedback, even when constructive, is believed by some faculty to lead to poor end of course evaluations or additional time to justify an earned grade to some students, and in some cases the students’ parents (p. 48). Schutz, Drake, and Lessner (2013) ascertained that while faculty identify the value of academic rigor, they “do not always follow their own standards” when calculating course grades. The faculty members’ failure to adhere to their own standards of rigor was caused by student and institutional pressures (p. 70).

Outside of the class, institutional policies have been identified as possible causes of grade inflation. Boretz (2004) noted that many institutions have extended their drop date for students, allowing students who would have earned a D or F to drop the course late in the term (p. 43), thus serving as a possible cause for the noted grade inflation.

Additionally and aligned to the consumerist model of higher education, Rojstaczer and Healy (2010) proposed that rising grades are a result of the increasing cost of higher education. Grades, as the “primary currency of data” (para. 2), are “like any currency...subject to inflation” (para. 5). Between 2000–2001 and 2010–2011, costs have increased 42% for public institutions and 31% at private institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). As a result of this inflation, students are “demanding the reward for a good grade for their purchase.” Students, as consumers of education, want to ensure that their purchased product is valued at the cost of tuition (Tucker & Courts, 2010, p. 47).

Further studies, while not focused directly on the demonstration of the inflation, addressed students’ expectations of earned grades (Loffredo & Harrington, 2012). Landrum’s (1999) study presented students with five grade categories (A,B,C,D, and F) and five explanatory measures of the five grade levels. For example, A was described as “distinguished” and B was identified as “superior.” The findings identified that, when using the narrative measures to describe the grade, 72% of the participating students expected to receive a full letter grade lower than what they expected to receive when applying the traditional grade categories of A, B, C, D, and F (as cited in Loffredo & Harrington, 2012, p. 1). Extending from Landrum’s study, Loffredo and Harrington

(2012) found that 96.4% of the participating students expected to receive an A (71.1%) or a B (25.3%). Interestingly, while over 95% of the students expected to receive an A or a B in their course, just 76.7% held a grade point average between 3.5 and 4.0 and 31.7% held a grade point average between 3.49 and 3.0 (p. 2). Similarly to Landrum's (1999) study, Loffredo and Harrington (2012) also found that 21.7% of the students surveyed expected to receive an A or a B in the course even though they had failed to meet the requirements for such a grade (p. 2).

Although researchers are not challenging the notion that students expect high grades, some research studies have suggested that the reason for grade inflation is part of the natural progression of higher education (McCall, 2011; Tucker & Courts, 2010). Tucker and Courts (2010) theorized that the observed grade inflation is in correlation to today's career focused education. Students often enter an academic program with industry experience or a heightened interest in a particular discipline (p. 47). McCall (2011) suggested that the increase in recorded grades is in direct correlation to instructional design improvements, faculty enhancement of teaching strategies and the application of practical methodology, and the utilization of first-year experience courses that aid students in preparing for the expectations of higher education (para. 5 & 6).

Regardless of the causes of grade inflation, some research findings have noted that students' behaviors often reflect a higher concern regarding their grades demonstrating "the appearance of achievement over achievement itself" (Pollio & Beck, as cited in Lippmann et al., 2009, p. 203). However, Roosevelt (2009) advocated that if students alter their focus from a recorded letter grade and cultivated their interest in a

subject, then the grade would become a secondary component. In the place of the hyper focus on a grade, the student would adopt a “holistic and intrinsically motivated [approach to] learning” (para. 23).

### **Implications of the Study**

Although observable academic entitlement behavior has been noted within recent years within the local community, such behavior has been present in academic research for the past three decades. Initially identified as “consumerism” by Reisman (1980) and Delucchi and Smith (1997), the interest in the later termed student academic entitlement behavior gained momentum in the early 21st (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger et al., 2008; Naidoo & Jamieson, 2005; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). This increased interest within the field of study served as an indication that student academic entitlement behavior is a growing concern within the higher education community.

Understanding the faculty’s views in regard to the causes of academic entitlement behavior and successful strategies used to curtail such behavior holds two implications. First, knowledge of the faculty’s perceived cause of academic entitlement behavior could serve as a change agent for the institution’s community to help maintain a learning-centered environment. Barr and Tagg (1995) and O’Banion (2009) posited the vital nature of a learner-centered institution, in which the institutional community is responsible for the achieved successes. Engrossed in a community of accountability, each stakeholder understands and acknowledges their role and responsibility to bring about student academic enrichment. In addition, taking action to understand the cause of

academic entitlement behavior is only part of the solution. The faculty will ultimately address the behavior within the academic environment and preparation is imperative.

The discovered themes of the three researched elements of academic entitlement behavior, causation, implication, and curtailment actions, will be offered to the study site community through a prepared position paper. With an intended audience of faculty, staff, and administration, the position paper is an “informative” (Purdue Owl, 2015, para. 1) document offering a summation of the faculty perceptions regarding the causes and academic implications of student academic entitlement behavior. Provided as a professional development opportunity, the position paper advocates for the faculty by identifying, based upon the data collected during the study, their recommendations for actions needed to curtail the behavior within the classroom environment and across the institution. However, as the focus of this study was not aligned to a specific institutional policy, the position paper does not offer specific policy recommendations, but rather serves as a platform to initiate discussion among the members of the institutional community. As a result, the social change implications from this study could support a paradigm shift within the study site’s community, which could potentially result in future changes to institutional practices and policies.

### **Summary**

Focused on the central phenomenon of student academic entitlement behavior, this qualitative case study seeks to ascertain the participating faculty’s perceptions of the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior and identify the strategies needed to curtail the behavior. Through the demonstration of an “expectation

of academic success without...personal responsibility” (Chowning & Campbell, 2009, p. 982), student academic entitlement behavior has been perceived by some of the study site’s faculty. Expecting accommodations and recompenses in exchange for minimal or no effort, these entitled students seek to reap the benefit of those around them who put forth the required effort needed for academic success. Alarmed by the observations of some of the faculty, the institutional community has dedicated considerable time and energy to address academic entitlement behavior (personal communication, December 11, 2013).

This study was grounded in the conceptual model of Morrow’s (1994) exploration of student academic entitlement behavior which suggested that when “entitlement presupposes achievement,” (p. 35) valid achievement in a learning environment is threatened. Morrow (1994) asserted that “it is incoherent to ‘delegitimize’ or repudiate educational or academic achievements in the name of educational entitlement” (p. 46). Self-constructed opinions of entitled learners result in the belief that any students’ failure is a direct result of the institution, the curriculum, or the faculty (p. 33). Morrow stated that it is doubtful that an entitled learner will “achieve epistemological access” (p. 41). Rather than the learner developing “respect for the practice in which [they are] trying to become a participant,” they view the learning experiences as an “antagonistic” environment, with an overly critical teacher at the helm “expressing their personal prejudices” towards the learner when recording a less than perfect score on an assignment (p. 42).

The provided Review of the Literature, which was sourced through the application of various Boolean search strategies within electronic databases located within the Walden University library, provided a comprehensive examination of relevant and current research regarding the causational factors of student entitlement behavior, including consumerism in higher education and generational characteristics, and the implications of student entitlement behavior, including student incivility and grade inflation. In an effort to demonstrate the connection between the expanding accessibility of higher education and student academic entitlement behavior, a brief history of America's higher education, including the establishment of community colleges, was also provided. As a result, an effective saturation of the literature, as it relates to the current study, has been achieved.

Researchers have suggested broad-spectrum causes and implications of academic entitlement behavior to the higher education community (Boswell, 2012; Cain et al., 2012; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Finney & Finney, 2010; Lippmann et al., 2009; Szekeres, 2010). This study was unique as it focused on the faculty perceptions of the causes and impacts of student academic entitlement behavior. Further discussion of the study's research design, including a description of the study's participants and methods of data collection and analysis, will be provided in the following methodological section. A discussion of the study's project, a position paper, will be presented in Section 3 of the study. The final section, Section 4, will present the researcher's reflections and conclusions of the current study.

## Section 2: Methodology

The intent of this study was to collect holistic evidence regarding the central phenomenon, student academic entitlement behavior, to understand the participating faculty's perceptions of student academic entitlement behavior, its causes, implications, and strategies needed to address and curtail the behavior. Section 2 of the study provides an overview of the considered methodological options and identifies, with justification, the selected approach. The methods used in participant selection, data collection, and data analysis are also provided. Furthermore, the findings are presented in accordance to the five major themes that emerged during the data analysis process.

### **Qualitative Research Design and Approach**

Performing a quantitative study was eliminated immediately when considering the central phenomenon and the purpose of the study. Because the study focused on the unique perceptions of the participating faculty, a human element was needed. Central to qualitative studies, the exploration of the participants' experiences, offered through their words and stories, was essential in understanding the various aspects of the study's central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012, pp. 16–17). Qualitative research seeks to “understand the meaning people have constructed” (Merriam, 2009, p. 13). Merriam described four characteristics of qualitative research. Identified first is the importance in focusing on understanding the phenomenon from the perspectives of the participants. Though the researcher's perspective of student academic entitlement behavior is not a factor, the concern of researcher's bias will be addressed. Humans, even in their most diligent efforts, hold biases that could have affect the study (p. 15). However, Bogdan



and Biklen (2007) suggested that because qualitative researchers endeavor to “objectively study the subjective states of their subjects” multiple strategies for removing any potential biases are taken (p. 37). Strategies used in the current study will be discussed in detail in the section entitled Data Collection. Returning to Merriam’s characteristics of qualitative research, the second characteristic suggests that the researcher is the “primary instrument for data collection and analysis” (p. 15). Taking an inductive approach, allowing the researcher to “build concepts, hypotheses, or theories,” Merriam explained that qualitative research is “richly descriptive” (pp. 15 & 16). In considering these four characteristics, a qualitative approach to the study was selected.

Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtler (2010) identified four qualitative research methods, which included grounded theory, phenomenological study, ethnographic study, and case study (pp. 15 & 16). A grounded theory approach, which allows the researcher to develop a theory, was rejected as a potential approach as this study was grounded in Morrow’s (1994) conceptual framework regarding student academic entitlement behavior. Furthermore, whereas Merriam (2009) noted that grounded theory is beneficial in focusing on the evolution of a process, the current study is not historical in nature regarding the faculty’s understanding of the central phenomenon nor does the study focus on the evolution of academic entitlement behavior. A phenomenological study was considered due to its objective to “capture the ‘essence’ of the human experience” (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 16). However, the purpose of the study was to understand what the participating faculty identifies as the causes and implications of academic entitlement behavior, not to solely present their perceived experiences with the phenomenon. An

ethnographic study was also considered as an ethnographic study examines “how interactions in a cultural group are influenced by a larger society” (p. 15). Defining culture as the “beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure the behavior patterns of a specific group of people” (Merriam, 2009, p. 27), the university, specifically the university’s faculty, could be identified as a culture. However, this study was bounded by the single campus location of the university and does not seek to study an identified “cultural patterning” (p. 28). The final method identified by Lodico et al. (2010) is a case study. This qualitative approach is “interpretive” (Merriam, 2009, p. 22) in nature and is focused on investigating and understanding a group or individual’s experience within a specific environment (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 269). The aspects of the “unit of analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 23), the faculty of the research site, define it to be a bounded system or a system with boundaries. Creswell (2012) noted that “a case study is an in-depth exploration of a bounded system” (p. 465).

The intention of a case study was to “gain insight into an in-depth understanding of an individual, group, or situation” (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 269). For the current study, which sought to describe and understand the participating faculty’s perceptions of the causes and implications of the central phenomenon of student academic entitlement behavior, a qualitative case study was selected as the research methodology. This qualitative case study sought to provide a holistic account from the participants’ perspectives to illustrate the case, resulting in a “description of the phenomenon under study” (Merriam, 2009, p. 43). The understandings gained from a qualitative case study can potentially be interpreted as a “tentative hypotheses” (p. 51) that can help shape

forthcoming research. As Merriam has advised, the “force of a single” case study is “underestimated” as it has the potential to lend itself to aid in the “generating and testing of hypothesis” (p. 53). This single case study could potentially contribute to the study of student academic entitlement behavior due to the increased interest in researching the construct (Alexander & Sysko, 2011; Arnett, 2013; Bergman et al., 2010; Burke et al., 2013; Greenberger et al., 2008; Kopp & Finney, 2013; Lippmann et al., 2009; Westerman et al., 2010).

### **Participants**

Adhering to the convention of qualitative research, the goal of this study was to ascertain what the participants identify as the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior and actions needed to inhibit the behavior. Designed as a qualitative case study, “two levels of sampling” were used (Merriam, 2009, p. 81). The first level of sampling was performed in the case selection. The criteria for the case were as follows: a private, regionally accredited, open admission, institution of higher education with observed student academic entitlement behavior. The second level of sampling performed was the sampling within the case.

### **Access to the Case**

The first level sampling results identified a single institution. To gain permission to conduct the study, the researcher, an adjunct faculty member at the study site, contacted her dean to request initial permission to conduct the study. Supporting the possibility of the study, the dean requested a summary of the study via email (Appendix B) that was presented to the chief executive officer (CEO) and the provost. A Letter of

Cooperation (Appendix C), which was developed in accordance with the guidelines established by Walden University's Institutional Review Board (IRB), was also included in the email to the dean. Responding positively to the study, the CEO and provost gained verbal approval from the university's chancellor. The CEO and provost then signed and returned the Letter of Cooperation confirming the university's approval for the research to be conducted. In accordance with institutional policy, an application to the research site's IRB was submitted and approved.

### **Sampling Method Within the Case**

Because the study sought to understand the perceptions of institutional faculty, a technique of purposeful sampling was employed to secure the study's participants. Random sampling was not used because it was not the intent of this study to test a theory aligned to student academic entitlement behavior and faculty perceptions (Creswell, 2012, p. 206). Purposeful sampling, according to Lodico et al. (2010), allowed the researcher to "identify key informants" who could provide a detailed insight into the phenomenon of study (p. 140). The participants of this study were selected using the purposeful sampling strategy of homogeneous sampling. A homogeneous sampling strategy allowed for the researcher to identify potential participants that belonged to a "subgroup" with "defining characteristics" (Creswell, 2012, p. 208). For the purpose of this study, the "defining characteristics" or criteria for participant selection were fourfold: (a) the participant must have an institutional designation of faculty (adjunct or full-time), (b) the participant has been teaching at the institution for a minimum of one year, (c) the participant must be teaching within the classroom (residential or online) during the

academic term in which the data will be collected, and (d) the participant has experienced a demonstration of what they perceive to be student academic entitlement behavior.

As is the nature of qualitative research, it was a goal to collect thick descriptive data regarding the meaning the participants made of their perceptions of the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior. In order to achieve this, researchers have acknowledged that, in qualitative research, the number of participants depends on the research questions, the data collected, the analysis method, and the resources available to the researcher (Merriam, 2009, p. 80). Noting the “ambiguity” regarding the appropriate sample size for qualitative studies, Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended “sampling until a point of saturation or redundancy is reached” and to discontinue the sampling “when no new information is forthcoming from new sampled units” (as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 80). A point of saturation within the data was achieved after 12 participants had been interviewed.

All participants for the study were selected in adherence to the following process. The research site faculty received an email from the researcher in which the purpose of the study, their role within the study, and the potential benefits of the study were explained (Appendix D). The email also identified the anticipated time commitment which included a 45-minute interview, time to review a summary of their transcribed interview, and a 10-minute follow-up phone interview. Faculty interested in participating in the study replied to the email and he or she was contacted by the researcher by telephone to determine whether the respondent met the criteria of the study (Appendix E). After the respondent affirmed the four questions presented, he or she was emailed a

consent form (Appendix F), which was developed in accordance with the guidelines established by Walden University's IRB, and a date and time for the interview was determined. The participants were asked to read, sign, and date the consent form, and, because the interview was to be conducted by telephone, the participants emailed the researcher the completed form prior to the scheduled interview. During the introduction phase of the interview, the researcher explained her role and restated the role of the participant. Each participant was reassured that his or her responses to the interview questions, any unstructured discussion, their identity, and the identity of the institution would remain confidential. Each participant was also reminded that their candid perspectives would provide valuable and credible data and were assured that all data collected would be used to construct the project study (Appendix G).

### **Ethical Protection of Participants**

Numerous overarching actions were taken to protect the study's participants. To conduct research with human subjects, IRB approval from Walden University was granted (#11-10-14-0282669). Furthermore, once consent from the research site's provost and chief academic officer to conduct research was gained, approval from the study site's IRB was also obtained (#11192014-4). To ensure the participants' rights and confidentiality additional measures were taken. These measures included the use of a participant code (e.g., P5, P12), collecting the data using a digital recording device that was owned by the researcher, and completing the transcription of all interviews in the researcher's private home office. All data were stored on her personal password protected computer. Hard copies of all information were kept in a locked file cabinet

located in the researcher's home office. The participants were also informed of their option to withdraw from the study at any time. Finally, further ethical protection included the researcher's dedication to an honest presentation of all data collected.

### **Positive Participant-Researcher Relationship**

According to Morrison, Gregory, and Thibodeau (2012), qualitative research requires a relationship of "comfort, trust, and ultimately rapport" between the researcher and the participant (p. 418). In order to establish a positive researcher-participant working relationship various efforts were made. Ethical approaches to ensure participant confidence, safety, and confidentiality were taken throughout this study and presented in the previous section entitled Ethical Protection of Participants. Study participants were informed of or reminded of these efforts and through these multiple opportunities to discuss the study via email and/or telephone, the participants and I developed a positive and professional working relationship.

### **Data Collection**

The intent of this study was to identify the meaning of the participants' perceptions of the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior. In keeping with the tradition of qualitative research, the data were collected during individual semi-structured interviews (Appendix E) with each participant. The method of interviewing in qualitative research included the use of "open-ended questions" that allowed the participants to share their experiences and perceptions without being controlled by the researcher's perspectives (Creswell, 2012, p. 218). Because this study employed a semi-structured interview format (Appendix E), specific questions were

prepared and opportunities to “probe beyond the protocol” during the interview were utilized (Lodico et al., 2010, p. 124). When conducting the semi-structured interviews, follow-up questions, known as “probes,” were also used to gain further clarification or elaboration about a participant’s specific response (p. 125).

The primary interviews and the follow-up member check interviews were conducted by telephone. It was anticipated that the primary interviews would last 45-minutes. During the data collection, the primary interviews lasted between 35 and 90-minutes. Each interview was recorded using a digital audio recording device and was then transcribed by the researcher for coding and analysis. The follow-up member check telephone interviews lasted between five and 20-minutes. Of the 12 participants, two were non-responsive to repeated attempts to schedule the follow-up interview.

The researcher also took descriptive field notes, in which the environment of the interview was described. Reflective field notes, which recorded the personal thoughts, insights, and observations of the researcher, were also taken (Creswell, 2012, p. 217). Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested that field notes “can be an important supplement” in qualitative research, as they can offer the study with the researcher’s log of the project’s development and the researcher’s conscious level of influence from the data collected (p. 119).

To conduct research with human subjects, IRB approval from both Walden University and the research site was required. Once Walden University IRB approval was received, the researcher followed the communicated protocol to begin the research site’s IRB application process.



Once IRB approval was granted at the research site, the published campus faculty directory was used to acquire contact email addresses for all faculty at the study site. In November 2014, each faculty member received an invitation via email to participate in the study (Appendix C). In January 2015, a reminder email was sent to the original list of recipients regarding the invitation to participate in the study. Respondents to the invitation received a telephone call from the researcher to determine if the potential participant met the four criteria for the study (Appendix F). Using homogeneous sampling, participants were selected from the population of main campus' faculty using the following criteria: the participants must have an institutional designation of faculty (adjunct or full-time); the participants have been teaching at the institution's main campus for a minimum of one year; the participants must be teaching within the classroom (residential or online) during the academic term in which the data were collected; and the participant must have experienced a demonstration of what they perceive to be student academic entitlement behavior.

It was expected that this case study would include 10 to 12 participants at which time it was anticipated that a point of saturation would be met. Twenty faculty members responded to the invitation to participate in the study; 13 of the respondents met all of the study's criteria and 12 of the respondents were interviewed. Once a faculty member accepted the invitation to participate in the study, a date and time for the interview were established and the participant was emailed the study's informed consent form (Appendix D). Each participant was asked to sign and email the researcher a scanned copy of the form prior to the interview.

The data collection and storage were done in a manner to ensure participant confidentiality and anonymity. Each participant was assigned a participation code (e.g., P7) for the purpose of anonymity. All data, including transcriptions, summaries, coding documents, and notes, were saved on the researcher's personal computer. Hard copies of all information were kept in a locked file cabinet located in the researcher's home office. All noted information for each participant was organized in individual electronic and hard copy folders.

### **Role of the Researcher**

In qualitative case studies, the “researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis” (Merriam, 2009, p. 52). Therefore, the role of the researcher in this study included dissemination of related documents, participant selection, establishment of the interview protocol, conducting the interviews, analyzing and interpreting the data, and reporting the findings. One additional role of the researcher was to disclose any relationships with the participants or history aligned with the study site, identify any experiences with the study's phenomenon, and acknowledge any potential biases that may affect the data collection and analysis.

The phenomenon of student academic entitlement behavior evolved into a topic of interest during the time in which the researcher served as an academic administrator for a for-profit, open admissions higher education institution. The previously noted institution is not the current research site. In these administrative roles, the researcher observed some of the faculty members growing concerned and frustrated due to the perceived lack of understanding of the expected roles and responsibilities of some of their

students and a demonstration of entitlement as it related to some of the students' academic progress. No longer in an administrative capacity, the researcher, having returned to the classroom full-time (before this study began), had personally experienced some students failing to understand their role and responsibility as a student of higher education, leading to demonstrations of academic entitlement behavior.

Potential bias due to professional affiliations or acquaintances with the study's participants is acknowledged. Though the researcher was a full-time, on-campus faculty member and department chair at the study site for six years, these are no longer her roles at the university. Seven years prior to data collection, the researcher transitioned from a full-time faculty and department chair position to an adjunct online faculty member, releasing all administrative roles and responsibilities.

Additionally, potential bias due to the researcher's perceived experience with the phenomenon of student academic entitlement behavior is acknowledged. Merriam (2009) suggested that "there is no greater bias in case study toward confirming preconceived notions than in other forms of research" (p. 53). To address any potential for bias, the researcher took specific actions. Before interviewing the study's participants, in an effort to acknowledge any personal bias, I responded to the prepared interview questions. The interview was conducted by a higher education professional who was not a stakeholder in the current study, thus reducing the interviewer's potential bias. Responding to the study's interview questions afforded an opportunity for me to consciously formulate my personal opinions regarding student academic entitlement behavior. Acknowledgement of such opinions assisted in guarding against transference

of personal bias during data collection and data analysis. Additionally, the descriptive and reflective field notes taken during the study's primary interviews afforded the opportunity for reflection upon any potential biases (p. 274).

All of these noted efforts were vital to the study due to the researcher's personal experience with the phenomenon of student academic entitlement behavior. The researcher believes that this phenomenon is present and increasing within the environment of higher education and that the phenomenon carries with it negative implications not only to the higher education community, but the larger community that resides beyond the institutional walls. It is also the belief of the researcher that there are universal causes of the phenomenon and implications, as outlined in the conceptual framework and the Review of the Literature of this study. Finally, it is the belief of the researcher that efforts made by all members of institutional communities can be taken to curtail student academic entitlement behavior. Recognition of these biases helped prevent the biases from influencing how the data were collected, analyzed, and reported.

### **Data Analysis**

The objective of data analysis is to make "sense out of the data" and because qualitative research, by tradition, strives to collect thick descriptive data, the "tolerance for ambiguity is most critical" (Merriam, p. 2009, p. 175). Merriam suggested that the process of analyzing data requires that the researcher shift between "concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation" in order to find meaning and insights regarding the studied phenomenon (p. 176).

Creswell (2012) suggested a series of steps to take when analyzing qualitative data (p. 237). In the current study, the data were prepared for analysis four days after each interview took place. During this time, each interview and set of field notes were transcribed by the researcher. From the transcriptions, a summary of the interview was prepared. Once the summary was complete, the researcher emailed the summary to the participant and requested that they review the summary for accuracy. The second interview, a 10-minute member check telephone call to the participant was scheduled. This follow-up interview afforded the participant an opportunity to verify the accuracy of the summary or to offer any additional information.

After the follow-up interview concluded, the process of data analysis began. Initiating the analysis process, a copy of each transcript was formatted into the data layout template described by Saldaña (2013). The template included a two column template, prepared in Microsoft Word, that allowed for the presentation of data within the left column and the right column included codes and researcher notes (p. 17). The transcriptions were initially read multiple times to gain a “general sense” of the collected data (p. 237). During these initial reviews, the data were pre-coded (Layder, 1998, as cited in Saldaña, 2013, p. 19) through the utilization of highlighting, bold font, and underlining significant information (Scoles, 2012).

An Eclectic Coding method for the First Cycle coding by incorporating three Elemental First Cycle coding methods was used (Saldaña, 2013, p.188). These three methods included components of Structural Coding, Descriptive Coding, and In Vivo Coding processes. Having used a semi-structured interview, five “structural codes”

emerged and permitted the researcher to “examine comparable segments’ commonalities, differences, and relationships” (p. 84). Although employed often in ethnographic studies, Descriptive Coding is appropriate for “virtually all qualitative studies” and allowed the researcher to identify what was being talked about within the data (p. 88). The third coding method utilized was In Vivo coding in which the “actual language” of the participant was presented within the code, allowing the researcher to “prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (p. 91).

The First Cycle coding process was completed by hand. A line by line coding approach was not employed. However, it was possible to “split” the data into “smaller codable moments” (Bernard, 2011, p. 379, as cited in Saldaña, 2013, p. 23). The following five main structural codes were established: (a) faculty definition of student academic entitlement behavior; (b) external causes of student academic entitlement behavior; (c) internal reinforcements of student academic entitlement behavior; (d) effects of student academic entitlement behavior; and (e) solutions needed to curtail student academic entitlement behavior. The identified codes from all transcripts were then typed into a separate file, and organized according to the structural code.

Engaged in Second Cycle coding, Pattern Coding was applied to categorize the codes from the First Cycle coding (Saldaña, 2013, p. 207). Pattern Coding allowed the researcher to categorize “similarly coded data” and identify a purpose to the category (p. 209). Miles and Huberman (1994) also identified pattern codes as a “meta code” due to possible identification of emerging themes, (p. 69, as cited in Saldaña, 2013, p. 210). As done within the First Cycle, the identified codes and categories from the Second Cycle

were copied into a separate file, organized according to the structural code, and analyzed to identify the data's themes. Inductive in its processes, coding the data allowed for themes and sub themes to emerge from the data. Elaboration and the connection between the discovered themes will be discussed in the section entitled Research Findings.

### **Accuracy and Credibility**

Merriam (2009) noted that “all research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner” (p. 209). Such was the intention and goal of the researcher. However, as Ratcliffe (1983) suggested, “data do not speak for themselves; there is always an interpreter or translator” and words can be “abstract, symbolic representations of reality, but not reality itself” (p. 149 & 150, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 213). As a result of this conundrum, Maxwell (2005) suggested that research validity “is the goal rather than the product” (p. 105, as cited in Merriam, 2009, p. 214). Various strategies were taken to enhance the validity and reliability of a study, including triangulation, member checks, and acknowledgement of potential researcher bias (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2012).

Though the acknowledgement of any potential researcher bias has been included in the section entitled Role of the Researcher, approaches taken regarding triangulation, member checks, and discrepant cases will be further discussed. Creswell (2012) defined triangulation as the “process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data, or methods of data collection” (p. 259). Twelve participants were interviewed for this study. The data “collected from people with different perspectives” allowed the researcher to triangulate the recorded data (Merriam, 2009, p. 216). Further enhancement

in the study's validity occurred through the use of member checks. Lodico et al. (2010) suggested the use of a "member checks" aid in the credibility of the data. Through "member checks" the participants had the opportunity to review a summary of the transcribed interview. Member checks were utilized after the participant's interview had been transcribed, but before the coding process has begun. Finally, discrepant cases may present themselves within qualitative research. Lodico et al. (2010) identified discrepant cases or negative case analysis as the process of "examining the data for examples that contradict or disconfirm the hypothesis" (p. 276). Throughout the data analysis process, no discrepant cases were discovered.

In summation, the previous section has described the actions taken to secure IRB approval from Walden University and the research site, the process of the data collection, data analysis, and the efforts made to present accurate and reliable data. Throughout the data analysis process discernable themes and subthemes emerged. Analysis of the data and the correlation between the themes, subthemes, and the research questions will be presented in the upcoming section, Research Findings.

### **Research Findings**

This case study arose from observable student academic entitlement behavior at a university in the southern United States. As presented in academic literature, the demonstration of student academic entitlement behavior is on the rise (Lippmann et al., 2009; Finney & Finney, 2010; Schaefer et al., 2013). However, past research regarding student academic entitlement behavior has focused primarily on the student perspectives rather than the perspectives of faculty. As a result, the purpose of this study was to



determine what faculty perceive as the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior and identify strategies needed to curtail the behavior.

Utilizing Morrow's (1994) conceptual framework that suggested when "entitlement presupposes achievement," (p. 35) valid learning is threatened, this study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How do faculty define student academic entitlement behavior?
2. What do faculty perceive as the cause(s) of student academic entitlement behavior?
3. What do faculty identify as the implication(s) of student academic entitlement behavior?
4. From the perspective of the faculty, what is needed from the institutional community to curtail student academic entitlement behavior?

Upon completing the data analysis, five major themes emerged. There were also numerous subthemes that emanated from each of the major themes. The major themes and subthemes are presented in Figure 1. Each of the five major themes will be discussed in relation to the specific research question that it answered.

### **Major Themes and Subthemes**

Faculty definition of academic entitlement behavior

- Grades
- Expectations of the student
- Responsibilities of the student

External causes of student academic entitlement behavior

- Generational characteristics
- Past academic experience
- Social media and reality television

Internal reinforcement of student academic entitlement behavior

- Student as the customer
- Institutional policies and standards
- Actions of the faculty
- Actions of the administration

Effects of student academic entitlement behavior

- Negatively affects student learning
- Negatively affects institutional reputation
- Pressure on faculty

Solutions needed to curtail student academic entitlement behavior

- Clarity of expectations
- Institutional policy
- Faculty professional development

*Figure 1.* The five major themes and aligned subthemes that emerged from the collection data.

The identified themes that emerged from data were collected from twelve of the research site's faculty members. One criterion for participation in the study was for the participant to have taught at the university for a minimum of one year. The mean length

of participant teaching time at the research site was 7.5 years, with two years as the shortest length of time and 17 years as the longest. Eight of the 12 participants identified themselves as full-time faculty. Four of the participants identified themselves as adjunct faculty. Of the 12 participants, seven of them taught exclusively within the undergraduate division of the university; two of the participants taught exclusively within the graduate and doctoral programs, and three participants disclosed that they taught classes at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral levels.

Although not a central research question, each participant was asked to describe the culture of the university. The participants' perceptions of the university's culture seemed relevant as background for the overall data collected. As suggested by Tierney (1988), "a central goal of understanding organizational culture is to minimize the occurrence and consequences of cultural conflict and help foster the development of shared goals" (p. 5). Comparing the participants' perceptions of the university's culture to the study's major themes helped to understand the causes of student academic entitlement behavior and establish institutionally accepted approaches for curtailing the behavior.

Peterson and Spencer (1991) defined "institutional culture as 'the deeply embedded patterns of organizational behavior and the shared values, assumptions, beliefs, or ideologies that members have about their organization'" (as cited in Campbell & Hourigan, 2008, para. 7). When considering the culture of the research site, the primary description that was shared among the study's participants was "student-centered." As stated by Participant 2, "the student is taking first place in pretty much

every decision that the school makes.” She continued to describe how programs, classes, and resources, essentially “everything” within the university’s environment is “geared towards helping the student succeed...[and] faculty are expected to provide whatever assistance students need to succeed.”

The environment of the university was described as “encouraging,” with faculty who “are very caring” (Participant 7); however, the hyper-focus on the student often times “works against” the university (Participant 4). As a for-profit institution, the student focus equates to defining the students as customers and without customers, there is no business. With the increase in competition, the university is in a “dog fight” to recruit, enroll, and retain students (Participant 11). Consequently, according to numerous study participants, due to the student centered focus, the students have become very aware that they are the customers and it is affecting the way that they behave.

### **Faculty Definition of Student Academic Entitlement Behavior**

The purpose of the study was to understand what the participating faculty perceives as the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior and what actions are needed to curtail the behavior. In order to clearly identify the causes and implications or suggest strategies to diminish the behavior, the phenomenon was first defined by the participants. Keeping with the approach of qualitative research, which seeks to “understand the meaning people have constructed” (Merriam, 2009, p. 15), the participants were not provided a definition of student academic entitlement behavior and were asked to define the behavior based upon their own perceptions and experiences. The responses given by the participants would answer the study’s first research question:

How do faculty define student academic entitlement behavior? Three subthemes emerged within the participants' definitions of student academic entitlement behavior.

**Grades, expectations, and responsibilities.** The presumption that academic success was inevitable, regardless of the level of effort applied by the student, was a characteristic present in all of the participants' definitions of student academic entitlement behavior. Independently, Participants 11 and 7 defined the behavior as an academically entitled student's belief that "showing up" will afford them academic success. Whereas Participant 3 defined the behavior as the students' expectation to be given a high grade on an assignment or a passing grade in a course that is not actually earned. Students, according to Participant 3, expect that they should be graded based upon their effort "rather than a grade for achievement." These students have the perception that they worked hard in the class and therefore they should be given an A for their effort. As stated by Participant 6, academically entitled students "expect the faculty member to do all of the work, tie it up in a pretty little package and present it with a bow, and all they have to do is say thank you." And, in return, they expect "an A of course!"

Affiliated with the expectation of academic success based upon perception of effort was the perceived level of responsibility of the student. Academically entitled students share a desire for leniency and exceptions to classroom policies. As Participant 3 described in his definition of the behavior, some students expect the teacher to change the classroom policies to suit their own needs. For example, some students, believing that the term "flexibility" means personal determination of assignment due dates, expect a teacher to change the established course policy which states no late work will be

accepted in order to permit the student to submit assignments on their own schedule. As Participant 4 explained, some students “have the expectation that you could eliminate some of the readings or extend the due dates or be a little lenient because they have a lot going on in their lives.”

This “take my hand and lead me type of mentality” is a reflection of some students’ struggles to recognize or accept their roles and responsibilities of the expected efforts and actions needed to earn their college degree (Participant 6). For some, “college and university is the most demanding mental work that they have ever had to do.” And, if the student believes that they should receive the benefits of a college or university education without having to work hard, then they will not recognize that they have an “equal responsibility in working for that education” (Participant 3). Rather than acknowledging and accepting personal responsibility for their education, they look to the teacher to “make everything alright” (Participant 12).

**Manifestation of the phenomenon.** After each participant provided a definition of the behavior, he or she was asked to describe a personal experience in which they would identify as a manifestation of student academic entitlement behavior. The provided examples of behavior manifestation ranged in intensity. Multiple participants identified the actions of students coming into class late or spending the majority of class time focused on their electronic device as manifestations of the behavior. Although such behaviors may be considered inconsequential, Participant 2 and Participant 11 both identified such behaviors, when constant, are manifestations of student academic entitlement behavior. The behavior “is just rude” and disruptive to other members of the

class (teacher and student). Such behaviors reflect the entitled student's mindset that "this is what I want to do right now and you can't do anything about it" (Participant 2) or demonstrates a belief that what the teacher has to say is "useless" (Participant 11).

***Hyper-focus on grades.*** The most prominently identified manifestation of student academic entitlement behavior was related to the students' hyper-focus on grades. As Participant 4 noted, grades are the "pressure points" for students. However, situations in which these "pressure points" are activated differ. As revealed by Participant 8, at least one student each quarter has demanded that she change his or her final course grade to an A. The "demanding" students believe that they "deserve" the A, even when the professor explains the various reasons why an A was not earned. These reasons often include the fact that the student failed to submit a major assignment on time or did not submit the assignment at all. Participant 12 offered similar examples and explained that some students believe that just submitting work equates to an earned A on the assignment. Often the work that some students submit fails to "resemble the criteria of the assignment in any way;" however, because work was submitted, the students believe that "they should get an A in the class." Similar in experience, Participant 6 described an event in which a student, after a no-call/no-show for the final examination, inquired "Well, what can *you* [emphasis added] do to make it up to me?" Participant 6 continued to explain that the student expected him to "either fudge them into a passing grade or...reconsider previous grades that would somehow get them into a passing level." As Participant 5 explained, students who demonstrate academic entitlement behavior with a hyper focus

on grades believe that it is their prerogative to not adhere to the “rules like everybody else” but still expect to receive the rewards and benefits as if they had.

***Lack of responsibility as a student.*** A second subtheme emerged as the participants described the manifestation of student academic entitlement behavior. Seven of the twelve participants offered examples to demonstrate their observations of the behavior in which some students revealed a lack of understanding of their responsibilities as a student. Such demonstrations of the behavior included Participant 5’s experience in which a student inquired as to why she was performing poorly on the course examinations. When the teacher asked if she was reading the assignments, the student explained that she did not enjoy reading and was expecting “special consideration” so she would not have to read the course material. Additional described experiences included a student who demanded his teacher excuse his patterned weekly absence in a course that met once a week (Participant 7) and students who, when the teacher reminded them about pending assignments, remarked that the teacher should just be thankful that they even come to class (Participant 10). A further example offered by numerous participants included students who remain engaged on a cell-phone or tablet, focused on personal text messages, emails, or other forms of social media, throughout the majority of class time. This action shows “a complete disregard” to the teacher, demonstrating that they do not care about learning about the information offered (Participant 11), and is disruptive to other students, impacting their learning opportunity (Participant 2).

***Student incivility.*** Most commonly present within the manifestation subthemes were demonstrations of student incivility. According to Participant 10, student incivility



is partially sourced from the students' misinterpretations of information that they are provided during the university's Orientation session. As explained by numerous participants, students attend an Orientation before the start of the academic term. During this Orientation, students are encouraged to seek assistance from their teachers. However, as explained by Participant 10, some students are misinterpreting this directive to mean "any faculty member will do absolutely anything" that the student tells them to do. Participant 10 recalled his experience while working on his own research in the university's tutoring center in which an adult student approached him and demanded that he find her five research articles on the computer and put them into proper citation format. After declining the student's directive, Participant 10 explained that the student swore at him and demanded that he find the articles for her because the Chancellor had told her that the faculty will do anything that a student tells them to do. Continuing, the student explained to Participant 10 that she was "not asking [him] to do this, I'm telling you to do this." When Participant 10 invited the student to walk down to the Chancellor's office to ask him to confirm the meaning of the information offered during Orientation, the student "backed down." Participant 10 explained that the student's "misinterpretation" of the responsibilities of the faculty that were described to her during Orientation was the catalyst for her behavior.

To describe the manifestation of the behavior, Participant 7 offered his experiences with a student who he identified as the "epitome of entitlement." According to Participant 7, the student's behavior began on the first night of class when the student informed the teacher that he was dating the daughter of one of the administrators. In the

beginning of class, the student displayed a complete disregard for the instructor's policy that permitted the use of electronic devices in class for the purpose of taking notes. Repeated attempts from the instructor to redirect the student failed. To gather support, the student enlisted two of his classmates and the disruptions increased. Due to the increasing disruption from the students, Participation 7 sought assistance from a member of the administration. Participant 7 was advised by the administrator to bring the disruptive students to him and he would discuss the unacceptable behavior with the students. Three times the students were sent to the administrator's office with no success. The primary offender's behavior escalated throughout the academic term, reaching a point in which some of his classmates, who were negatively affected by the behavior, halted their own group presentation to address the behavior, stating that the disruptive student was being "rude to the rest of the class." Upon completion of the course, when the student did not receive A's in the course, Participant 7 stated that he received emails that were filled with "animosity" from the student.

***Attitudinal manifestation.*** Some faculty identified that the manifestation of student academic entitlement behavior is also attitudinal in nature. Participant 2 defined the phenomenon as students demanding respect from faculty, staff, and fellow students without reciprocating respectfulness. This mindset suggests that an academically entitled student can behave in whatever manner he or she wishes (e.g., disrupting classroom activities, demanding special considerations, inconsideration of time) without consequence or consideration of others. However, this mindset, as Participant 4 described, often manifests itself in a disturbing and "surprising" behavior. "The

forcefulness...and the argumentativeness that students have with faculty members over assignments, reading, [and] paper's due dates" demonstrates a clear lack of respect for and a lack of understanding of the "symbiotic relationship" between the student and faculty.

It is suggested that students demonstrating academic entitlement behavior "want the degree...they don't really care about the education." As expressed by Participant 12, "there is an expectation that the instructor will bend all of the rules or cater specifically for that student's perspective of how a university graduate or undergraduate degree should be administered, without regard for the actual rules themselves." The participants described examples of the manifestation of the phenomenon and posited that students who present academic entitlement behavior demonstrated an attitude of unlimited expectation of rewards with a disregard to the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders (e.g., faculty, staff, students, and employers). In keeping with the participants' definitions of the phenomenon, the following sections will present the participants' perceptions of the external causes and the internal (institutional) reinforcements of student academic entitlement behavior.

### **Perceived Causes of Student Academic Entitlement Behavior**

In order to address the second research question of the study, what faculty perceive as the cause of the phenomenon, participants were asked to identify what they considered to be the primary cause of the behavior. The participants were then asked to identify any subsequent causational factors or influences that could intensify the behavior. In the analysis of these questions, two major themes emerged. The

participants all identified what they believed to be causal factors that existed outside of the university's environment, stating that some students entering the institution bring with them a previously learned sense of entitlement. Along with this pre-existing mindset, the participants identified numerous institutional actions that strengthened and reinforced the behavior among some students or aided in the onset of student academic entitlement behavior.

**External causes of student academic entitlement behavior.** Within the external causes of the behavior, three subthemes emerged: (a) generational characteristics, (b) past academic experience, and (c) social media and reality television. However, before elaborating upon these subthemes, it should be noted that additional, but three less prominent themes also emerged during the data analysis phase of the study. These patterns in the data included (a) the impact of technology, (b) the influence of the marketplace competition, (c) and the actions of the United States government. As suggested by Participant 11, students today are witness to “some of the greatest technology our world has known in the modern age” and with that come challenges and opportunities. The students are “married to their technology” and perform a simple Google search to find valuable information that was, in the past, offered by the teacher in the classroom. Some students today, due to the copious technological options available to them, have struggled to “develop habits that...[are] useful for functioning in culture,” including functioning in a higher education environment (Participant 7). In addition to the influence of technology, some participants also perceived the impact of the increasing competition in the market share of higher education. This “dog fight” for students has

increased as a result of the growing number of institutions that are vying for student enrollments (Participant 11). Correlated to one of the major subthemes, generational characteristics, some students today “have no loyalties to their organization.” If they don’t like the rules, they will find a new school (Participant 12). Although some participants noted the influence of the market place competition as an external cause of the behavior, this causational factor was more prominently identified within the institution’s reinforcement of the phenomenon and will be presented in the forthcoming subsection. The final less prominent sub-theme to emerge was the influence of government actions. Through the “litany of...government programs” that offer people “transportation, shelter, food, communication” some people now perceive these items as “rights” that they are entitled to receive (Participant 7). Education has become one of these perceived “rights” that comes with “free money from the government” through federal loans and financial aid (Participant 3) rather than being recognized as “something that I need to work to try to accomplish and capture” (Participant 7).

***Generational characteristics.*** The attention to generational characteristics as an external cause of student academic entitlement behavior provided a wide range of specific causational elements that were directly focused on the Millennial student. Participant 10 perceived that the entitled mentality and manifestation were products of high praise and positive feedback received throughout their childhood from various adults. Through this learned behavior, some Millennials now consider that education is a right afforded to them rather than something that they must earn. Their expectation within a higher education environment is, according to Participant 11, to have someone

“take care of” various responsibilities for them. However, their loyalty is not necessarily with the institution or with the teacher. If the “younger generations...don’t like the rules; they don’t adhere to the rules. They make their own rules [and] if you don’t like them, they move on to somewhere else” that will (Participant 12). Currently within higher education, “traditionalists have designed all of our programs...and the baby boomers are the ones that execute what the traditionalists have carved out in the university system” (Participant 12). Due to the difference in approaches among the generations, “one generation doesn’t trust the other.” The Millennials student population struggles to understand the purpose and direction of the programs developed by members of different generations (Participant 11).

***Past academic experience.*** The second subtheme regarding external causes of the phenomenon was past academic experience. With a focus on the prior educational environments serving as the catalyst for the observed behavior, Participants 2, 5, and 6, independently of each other, suggested that the behavior was present throughout past academic experiences but that the student displaying the behavior was never corrected. Upon entering higher education, the students who were “shuttled through” their past school environment may have brought with them a belief that their inappropriate behavior would continue to result in a passing grade and they would continue to be passed along throughout their courses and academic program (Participant 6).

Contrary to a struggling student being “shuttled through” the system, but related to past academic experience, Participant 12 suggested that the “merit of the A” has been diluted. Participant 12 further explained that some students claim that they have always

received an A in the past. Resultantly, the students may maintain the expectation that due to past performance he or she will continue to receive an A in their course, regardless of his or her adherence to curriculum requirements and expectations. Some students “expect the professor to...just throw the academic criteria for earning an A out and give them an A because they have been an A student.”

***Social media and reality television.*** The final subtheme that emerged regarding external catalytic factors of student academic entitlement behavior focused on the influence of social media and reality television. Participant 3 suggested that a “social acceptability of being entitled” has developed within the current culture. Reflected in social media where some people share with their “Friends” and “Followers” the intricate and often mundane details of their lives, entitlement behavior is evident as some people believe “that it is all about them.” Some students expect to be entertained while in the classroom and anticipate the production lights of a television crew or an office environment that rivals that of the law enforcement officers of the CSI unit seen on television (Participants 5 & 11). Described by Participant 11, students watch the “infotainment” on the Food Network and expect that all that is needed to ensure success is two to four years of higher education and they will be the “next Food Network star.” Some students focus on the 15 minutes of high-pressure activity that results in a successful outcome and either ignore or forget about the behind the scenes preparation that was required to meet the carefully orchestrated goal seen on television. Similarly, Participant 5 stated that some students enter his program with “unrealistic expectations.”

The students will express to him that they want to do the “cool stuff on tv, on CSI.” If some students are “not entertained then they don’t want to be here.”

**Internal reinforcements of student academic entitlement behavior.** In addition to naming various external causes of student academic entitlement behavior, the participants also identified numerous institutional actions that strengthened or assisted in the development of student academic entitlement behavior among some students. The internal reinforcements that aid in the perpetuation of the behavior are (a) the impact of identifying the student as a customer; (b) institutional policies and standards; (c) actions of the faculty; and (d) actions of the administration. As shared by Participant 3, “in our efforts to do right by our students, sometimes our actions can actually reinforce academic entitlement behavior” (personal communication, December 16, 2014). Identified as a school with a culture that is “student centered,” students are repeatedly told that the institution will do all it can to make them successful. Consequently, students learn that those “who complain the loudest are the ones that tend to get their way” (Participant 10). Although the “student focus is good...it can also have a rough edge to it” (Participant 4).

***Student as the customer.*** During the analysis of the student as the customer subtheme, three different levels of involvement, those of the institution, the students, and the faculty, emerged from the perspectives of various participants. The research site has been described by the majority of the study’s participants as having a student centered culture. However, within this for-profit institutional culture, as stated by Participant 3, the university does “tend to operate with more of a mind toward business,” and with this business mind, the research site maintains a culture of “customer service...with the



student being the customer” (Participant 4). Employing this student centered customer service model, some participants suggested that the student as a customer philosophy is sourced from the principal “incentive to keep people enrolled” (Participant 5) and “keep the revenue streaming” (Participant 11).

With the increase in competition in the marketplace of higher education throughout the past two decades, as Participant 11 expressed, it feels as if “we are in a bit of a dog fight right now.” No longer can the institution survive off of sourcing potential students from the single location of its own community. There are “fewer and fewer students” to fill the classrooms even with recruitment looking “beyond their usual hunting ground for students.”

According to Participant 4, the students know that they are considered the “customer” and from this understanding academic entitlement behavior is reinforced. With some students identifying themselves as customers, some participants have observed students utilizing the term as “justification” to get what they want (Participant 3). For example, Participant 10 witnessed, “several students say all they have to do is threaten that they are going to go someplace else and everybody [administration and faculty] gets scared and does whatever they [the students] want them to do.” Participant 10 stated that he heard “some students joking about what they were able to accomplish when they make the threat of leaving.”

As a result of the smaller recruitment pools of potential students, the institution has begun to stress the importance of student retention. However, with the juxtaposition of these two components, the institution has potentially found itself in an academic

quandary (Participant 3). Due to the “customer service” philosophy influenced by a focus on retention that is driven by a decrease in student enrollment, participants were asked if the adage “the customer is always right” is applicable at the research site. Both Participants 3 and 8 responded that the adage is not correct; however, as Participant 3 continued, it is when the “retail idea that the customer is always right...that causes the problems” within higher education. Although the customer may always *want* to be right, they are not; however, “there is always a solution to the issue...that you all [administration, faculty, and student] can live with” (Participant 8).

***Institutional policies and standards.*** Two specific policies and standards emerged during the analysis of the impact of internal institutional reinforcements of student academic entitlement behavior. These two included the institution’s attendance policy and its focus on retention. Currently, the institution’s attendance policy for an on-campus course that meets four days a week during the eleven week academic term length states that a student is dropped from the course upon his or her eighth absence. There were two different perspectives regarding this policy among the participants. Participant 6 expressed frustration and concern in regards to the process that faculty must follow if they readmit a student that has been dropped for excessive absences. Participant 6 explained that the original intent of the reinstatement form was to help faculty encourage students not to miss class. However, the reasons for the excused absences are not published and some students have discovered that the “more they whine and cry and make complaints...they can get anything excused.” Consequently, some faculty believe that “any excuse is a good excuse” in regards to excused absences so they will not have

to complete the extensive reinstatement form or receive a request from administration to reinstate the student. Participant 11 offered a different perspective, one that was focused on the academic impact, in regards to his concerns about the attendance policy. “Two weeks! We are talking about two weeks of class [the student] gets to lose; [the student] gets to miss” Participant 11 explained. From his perspective, the attendance policy encourages the students to look upon his courses and any other course that the student takes as if “there are two weeks in this ten week period, one-fifth of the class that is useless....That’s what we are telling students.”

In addition to the attendance policy, the institution has become “hyper-focused on retention in the wrong way” (Participant 4). All participants agreed that retention efforts are important; however, Participants 2, 4, 6, and 11 all expressed concerns with the intensity to which the institution employed its retention efforts. For example, Participant 11 stated that while some Millennial students appreciate the extra effort the faculty make when they call or email a student that is nearing the maximum absence allowance, Participant 2 questioned the effect of this extra effort by the faculty and the counter-production it may have if one is trying to teach a college student responsibility and accountability. Additionally, there were independently shared concerns about the extensive efforts to retain students who have demonstrated that they “simply can’t do the work” (Participant 4) or “students that really don’t have the will or the want to be at this [academic] level” (Participant 11). As explained by Participant 1, further action from administration to stress the importance of retention includes the weekly retention reports which are sent out to encourage faculty to keep students progressing through their

courses. He continued to explain that the administration has “this mindset that we [have to] hold on to every student that comes in the door.”

***Actions of faculty.*** As noted by Participant 4, the relationship between faculty and students is “symbiotic.” However, as explained by Participant 3, in a “culture of wanting to do what is best for the student...perhaps there will be a faculty or administrator that has a hard time saying no” thus encouraging student academic entitlement behavior. Examples offered by the participants included both literal and allegorical demonstrations of the difficulty faculty have in saying no to students. For example, Participant 12 expressed his concerns about some faculty bowing “to student complaints” in order to avoid an official grade appeal. Participant 2 stated that after she had observed the majority of her students ignoring her during classroom instruction. Out of “frustration” from continuous student incivility, towards the end of the academic term she entered the classroom, provided the students an assignment and said “have at it.” Although some faculty may believe that affording flexibility or leniency in their classroom policies or expectations may offer benefits to the students, Participant 6 explained that such behavior from the faculty only adds to the student’s “delinquency” and when not corrected, the behavior will remain and manifest once again when the student enters a colleague’s classroom.

***Actions of administration.*** The fourth subtheme discovered during the analysis of the internal reinforcements of student academic entitlement behavior was the actions of administration. Perceived actions of the administration that encourage or develop the behavior in students begin before the academic term starts. Before the academic term

begins, the incoming students attend an orientation in which the administration of the research site is introduced to the students. According to Participant 6, it is during orientation that the administration identifies to the students their academic responsibilities and “leads them to believe that the faculty member will do everything for them to accomplish their success.” Similar overviews of the orientation session and the administration’s message were reported by five additional participants. Participant 10, one of the five participants that shared a similar overview of the orientation process, expressed that he believed that the students are misinterpreting the message from the administration. Another one of the five participants who shared a similar experience aligned to some students’ interpretation of the university’s orientation stated that she believed that some students are taking the message “to the extreme.”

According to the participants, the actions of the administration that enable the phenomenon to persist continue throughout the academic term. One example offered was that of an enrollment party for the students, which, according to Participant 6, is held after current students should have registered for the next academic term. At the party, there are prizes, food, and drinks for the students. As Participant 6 explained, from the administration’s point of view, this party is in an effort to register the students who have not yet signed up for the next term. From a student’s point of view, this party says “I can ignore my advisor, go to a party, potentially win a game, and then write my own enrollment.” Participant 6 continued that the enrollment party encouraged students to ignore their academic advisor, whose responsibility it is to help the student register for courses scheduled during certain academic terms to help ensure the student graduates on

time. As a result of choosing to attend the enrollment party rather than working with their advisor, some students found that as they neared their final academic term, required courses were not offered in time for their planned graduation.

Aside from the example of the enrollment party, the primary demonstration of this occurred when a student would go to the administration to complain about a grade. Participant 2 offered an example to demonstrate the most commonly noted example of enabling actions of administration. She explained that she had a student go to a member of the administration and inquire as to a certain grade that was received. Instead of advising the student to talk with the faculty member first, the administrator contacted the faculty member's department chair. Participant 2 explained that she was unaware that the student had any questions about the earned grade until she was approached by her department chair. Participant 10 provided a similar story in which the student complained to her admission's representative about her earned grade. The admission's representative then approached the faculty member's dean, advising the dean that the situation "hadn't been handled exactly right" by the faculty member. The dean investigated but found no evidence to support the student's grade challenge. The student continued to complain and, as explained by Participant 10, the message he received was "find a way to make her [the student] happy."

This apparent institution commitment to ensure that the expectations of the students are met has, according to Participant 4, ignited "a culture of fear" within the university's faculty community. As Participant 4 expressed, the research site "gets in your blood;" the faculty are there because they want to be there. However, as Participant

10 stated, if there is a student who is not happy they could leave the institution “and take a couple other people with them. And, if that happens then we’ll have to lay off some teachers.” This message of a disposable faculty is expressed “sometimes in very clear language” which is “hurting the faculty as a whole.”

### **Effects of Student Academic Entitlement Behavior**

The fourth major theme discovered during the data analysis was the effect of the phenomenon. Through the analysis of the thematic data regarding the effects of the phenomenon, the current study’s third research question, which asked what faculty identify as the implication(s) of student academic entitlement behavior, can be addressed. During the interview, each participant was asked a series of questions in regards to how they perceived the phenomenon to be impacting the students’ learning experience. Each participant was also asked how the phenomenon was impacting him or her as a faculty member. Finally, each participant was asked how he or she perceived the phenomenon affecting the institution. Analysis of the data suggested a connection among the discovered principal subthemes regarding the effects of the behavior. The participants affirmed that they believe that behavior impacts the students’ learning. In addition to the perception that the students’ learning is affected, some participants stated their concerns for the institution’s reputation if unprepared or underprepared students graduate and enter the workforce. Finally, some participants suggested that the apparent institutional focus on student retention, which some suggested inadvertently reinforces academic entitlement behavior, has, in effect, placed undue pressures on the faculty.

During the interview, each participant was asked to describe how student academic entitlement behavior was impacting him or her as a faculty member of the institution. Although the focus of this study was not to define or quantify emotional descriptors, due to the emerged subtheme in which various emotions were used by the participants to describe the effects of the behavior, it is believed to be relevant to present these findings. Seven of the twelve participants described student academic entitlement behavior as “frustrating.” Participants 9 and 11 further described the behavior as “disappointing,” and Participant 8 explained that the behavior, as well as the student exuding the behavior, is “demanding.”

Presented in a previous section entitled Faculty Definition of Student Academic Entitlement Behavior, one of the perceived manifestations of the behavior is a hyper-focus on grades. Some participants believed that this immense attention to grades is having a detrimental effect on the students’ learning experience. As Participant 10 stated, “the grade is more important than the learning.” Participant 7 suggested that academically entitled students bring with them “an unrealistic expectation to the classroom and instead of approaching the subject that they are going to be learning as an opportunity to expand their knowledge, they may be coming in with the expectation of a grade.” As Participant 12 stated, the learning experience of the student is “negatively” impacted. This is “primarily because some students behave with the expectations that hard work is the same thing as earning an A.” Participant 12 explained that he believes that some students maintain “the expectation that I’m an A student and therefore if I just do the work, then I am going to get an A.” However, if the work that is completed fails



to align to the assignment requirements and rubrics, the results are that some students' do not achieve the objectives identified in the course (Participant 12).

Expanding beyond an assignment grade or a course grade, numerous participants believed that some students struggle to recognize the comprehensive structure of their degree program. As stated by Participant 2, "in a lot of circumstances students don't have the connection between what goes on in the classroom and actually earning a degree." This disconnect in learning is a result of some students lack of an "investment in their education," according to Participant 4.

Additionally, as previously suggested, the increased consumeristic attitude within higher education, which was suggested to be the result of an increased competition within the marketplace, was also perceived by some of the participants to have an effect on some of the students' hyper-focus on grades. Some participants also suggested that endorsement of a consumeristic model within higher education can function as a catalyst for student academic entitlement behavior. Participant 2 remarked that "it is hard to produce a high quality education when so many students aren't interested in doing that." As stated by Participant 3:

there is a danger because we are a student-centered institution and we also tend to talk in rhetoric of students as customers and students paying tuition. And that is all true. But, if you take that over to a strictly business or retail sense then you introduce the culture that the culture is always right. I think that introducing the retail idea that the customer is always right, that's the part that causes the problems.

Some of the participants' perceived impact on the students' hyper-focus on grades rather than learning correlated to an additional identified concern, that of the institution's reputation. Participant 2 assured, "we *want* [emphasis] the students who will make a name for themselves at [the research site] and show that [it] is a good school to go to." However, as Participant 12 reflected on his past experiences at the research site's commencement ceremonies, he noted that while reading the list of graduating students in the ceremony's program

you see honor roll, honor roll, honor roll, honor roll...time and time again. And we know that not everybody graduates from college has the mental faculty to be an honor roll student. I think too many faculty members have made it too easy to get an A, because when a student gets an A, there are no complaints.

Aligned to the concerns identified by some of the participants, Participant 11 expressed his "concern about quality" in regards to the knowledge base and abilities of some of the research site graduates "because we push so many through."

The suggested effect of appeasing the hyper-focus on grades as it aligns to student academic entitlement behavior could have a potentially harmful consequence for the institution's reputation. As suggested by Participant 4:

If we do give into the sense of entitlement and pass students along who are really a marginal student, in the long run those students are going to go out into the workforce and get a job and when that company knows that they earned their degree from [the research site] they'll never hire other [research site] graduates.

For companies that pay tuition benefits, they certainly won't pay to send their employees there to earn a degree.

Participant 4 further elaborated, "if we put out there students who are not prepared, but we graduated them, then good students won't come and companies won't hire" our graduates.

In addition to the emotional responses (e.g., frustrating and disappointing) to the behavior, the effect that the phenomenon has on student learning, and the concerns some participants identified in regards to the institution's reputation, some participants also identified various ramifications that the behavior has on them. Participant 3 explained that the behavior affects his "time and productivity". As Participant 3 explained:

Students demanding things that they did not earn and students wanting you to bend rules....[This] takes time and productivity to try to deal with, whether it is going back and forth with multiple emails with students or having to go in and research what the students did or didn't do. When you have something that is done frivolously, then it is a waste of time for the instructor and for other people. The student doesn't see it as a waste of time because [they think] if I spend a little bit of effort I could end up getting a higher grade. So, the students do it because they see a good return on investment. There is no return on investment for the faculty member. It is typically just a lot of time and the outcome is exactly what it was in the beginning.

As Participant 10 stated, the teachers who respond to manifestations of academic entitlement behaviors "get buried by it." Similarly, Participant 6 affirmed that "no good

deed goes unpunished, and...it is incredibly true with students. The one that says ‘give me one more chance’ is most likely the one that is going to come back and bite you.” As Participant 5 quipped, “I gave up a long time ago trying to get a truthful reason for excuses.”

The final effect of the behavior, as perceived by some of the participants, was the “fear” or “pressure” that have developed within the institutional environment, specifically within the faculty community, as a result of the institution’s apparent attention to student retention. As Participant 4 explained, “as a faculty, we are told [during various faculty meetings] and sometimes in very clear language, we are told that we are replaceable.” She continued to explain that “there is always this fear in the back of our minds that we could be replaced” and that “some people will do whatever it takes” to keep their jobs. Some faculty, as suggested by Participant 3, “may feel pressure to give into student entitlement....They don’t want to be the object of a lot of grievances and allegations.” As Participant 4 expressed, “there is definitely [emphasis] a culture of fear.” Consequently, Participant 4 also suggested that such behavior, from both administration and faculty, is “diluting the education and harming our reputation.”

### **Recommendations to Curtail Student Academic Entitlement Behavior**

The final major theme discovered during the data analysis addressed the research study’s fourth research question which sought to identify actions that could be used to help curtail student academic entitlement behavior throughout the institutional community. During the interviews, each participant was asked a series of questions that focused on his or her actions to curtail the behavior, needed actions of the administration

to curtail the behavior, and any university wide actions that could be taken to decrease student academic entitlement behavior. The principal sub-theme that emerged was the importance of communicating clear expectations to the student population and maintaining the standards and expectations, especially when they are challenged. Some of the participants also suggested the modification of the university's admissions policy would aid in decreasing the behavior. The final sub-theme that emerged during the data analysis was need for professional development among faculty and administration.

When each participant was asked to define student academic entitlement behavior, each of them identified grades as a primary factor in the behavior. This was the first of two occurrences in which all twelve participants responded unanimously. The second incident of a unified response was when each participant identified providing clear expectations to the student population as an action needed to curtail student academic entitlement behavior. Participant 3 stated that "if the instructor or the institution is not sending a clear and consistent message, then it opens the door for subjectivity." It is in this realm of subjectivity "where academic entitlement lives" because "entitlement thrives when there is ambiguity."

The importance of clear expectations within the classroom environment was identified by some of the participants as a possible method to curtail the behavior. Much of the provided recommendations by the participants included the importance of a clearly designed course. According to Participant 12 such a course allows students to "learn to adhere to the criteria" without limiting "their creativity or their ability to generate theory." Such clarification would come from the faculty member's description of

assignments, assignment criteria, and the application of rubrics (Participant 12).

Participant 8 also identified the need for clear, well-defined assignment expectations and stressed the importance of communicating these expectations often and immediately. She explained, “I give them answers before they have questions.”

Beyond the importance of clarifying the academic expectations, some participants identified expectations that align to conduct and responsibility. Participant 3 identified the importance of clear expectations in regards to “student conduct [and] student respect towards faculty and other students.” Participant 5 stated that he is “adamant about teaching” the importance of “personal responsibility and personal integrity.” Participant 5 explained that if he witnesses any occurrences in which a student is “not demonstrating integrity, I will address that personally” with the student. He believes that if “we short cut” these types of opportunities to help our students learn then “we are doing them a disservice.”

However, as suggested by Participant 6, after the standards and expectations are identified and continuous actions are taken to ensure that the students understand the importance of them, faculty must demonstrate to the students that “you will stick to the standards you set forth.” As Participant 5 stressed the importance for students to demonstrate and maintain “personal integrity,” Participant 4 stressed the same for faculty. She stated that there “is a balance where you can be an excellent faculty member but not give in” to the unreasonable or unrealistic demands of an academically entitled student.

The participants’ perceptions of the importance of clarifying the institutional expectations of the student population expanded beyond the classroom setting and

focused primarily within the information that is communicated to incoming students during Orientation. Some participants identified a current weakness concerning the university's Orientation session. Rather than utilizing the opportunity to clearly identify the institution's expectations in regards to the responsibilities of the students, during the Orientation, according to Participant 6, "we spend a lot of time trying to entertain them. It is a lip service at the beginning of their academic career." Additionally, as previously presented in the section entitled Manifestation of the phenomenon, according to Participant 10, students misinterpret some of the information provided to them during the Orientation session. Participant 4 explained that students are told that the faculty's job was to "help [them] get through" their selected academic program, but she suggested that some of the students are "taking that to the extreme" and transferring the responsibilities of the student onto the faculty. As identified by Participant 9, the current Orientation session in which incoming students must attend is an "excellent opportunity" to clearly identify the expectations of the university in regards to the role and responsibilities of the university's students. Participant 9 further suggested the creation of an Orientation for each degree program that would allow for the department leadership and faculty to define the "program specific expectations" to the incoming students.

In addition to clarifying the expectations, some participants suggested that amending the institution's current admission's practice would aid in diminishing student academic entitlement behavior. Reconsidering the university's current admissions process was identified as an opportunity to impede the behavior across the institution. When discussing their desire for administration to evaluate the current admissions policy,

many of the participants acknowledged their understanding that, as Participant 10 noted, “numbers are important;” students are needed. Some participants suggested that the university become “a little more exclusive” in the selection and admittance of the student population to aid in the declination of student academic entitlement behavior (Participant 11). Suggested approaches as to how the university could increase its selection process varied. Participant 6 suggested that the university apply new recruitment procedures, including the use of a new entrance exam that is administered by a third party. Aligned to but different from an entrance exam, Participant 4 suggested the incorporation of a “pre-test where we could better guide students into their degree programs” or a “Discover the Field” type scenario, as suggested by Participant 5. Additional recommendations associated with the admissions process was the suggestion from Participant 1 who proposed the incorporation of an interview as part of the application process to ensure that the applicant “isn’t a student that just expects to be given a piece of paper that says [Research Site] on it.” As part of the admissions process, Participant 3 suggested “an honor policy that students will read and sign” upon admittance to the school. Participant 3 noted the university does not currently have an honor code that students are required to sign.

The final sub-theme to emerge during the data analysis of recommended solutions to curtail the behavior was the incorporation of professional development opportunities. As Participant 11 stated, the faculty need focus on “being smarter educators and being better at teaching. But this is where the school needs to step in more.” The university, according to Participant 11, currently offers professional development (PD) opportunities



through online presentations. He described these presentations as “very helpful,” but would like more PD opportunities that focus on developing a strong curriculum. As he expressed,

Let’s talk about how to make effective measurements of the learning experience because to me, that’s important. I really do care about what I do and I care about whether or not the student learns, so help me with that!

Additionally, Participant 7 stressed the disconnect of the currently utilized methodologies as they align to the millennial population of students, stating that “I don’t think how we are educating now is the most effective way.”

Some of the participants also suggested opportunities for administration to participate in professional development to help diminish the behavior. Participants 3, 9, and 11 all suggested that administration need to maintain a presence in the classroom in order to understand and be able to identify with the described experiences of the faculty. As stated by Participant 9, administrators need to teach “at least one class per year.” Participant 3 explained that “administrators who spend all of their time in the office and not in the trenches can get disconnected from this process.” Participant 11 stated, referring to administration, that “if you are not out there...mixing it up and learning, you probably are not the leader that you need to be.” As Participant 3 expressed, because graduate schools have by and large abdicated their role in training faculty...it is up to the institution to train their faculty, to set their expectations for their faculty, and to train faculty how to meet those expectations, just as they expect faculty to train the students.

However, as suggested by Participant 7, in order to truly take action to curtail student academic entitlement behavior “you have to have buy-in from the administration.” The administration must acknowledge that “yes, this is a situation that exists and yes, it is a problem, and yes, we want to change it.” When this “conclusion has been made, I think that the administration can come down to the faculty level to partner and work it out how they are going to work together to make this change.”

### **Conclusion**

Section 2 provided a detailed account of the data collection and data analysis process that was utilized throughout this qualitative case study. Using a homogeneous sampling of the research site’s main campus faculty, the researcher sought to identify the meaning of the participants’ perceptions of the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior. Data were collected during a semi-structured phone interview and a follow-up phone interview. Triangulation and member checking were both used to assist with data accuracy. During data analysis, five major themes emerged from the data transcriptions. Each theme, as it correlated to a specific research question of this study, was presented in detail in the section entitled Research Findings.

The forthcoming section of this study includes a description of the study’s developed project, a position paper (Appendix A). Additionally included in Section 3 is a literature review that centers on the efficacy of the selected project genre and the validity of the study’s findings. There are three goals within the position paper, with the overarching goal of the project to initiate discussion among the research site’s

stakeholders of administration and faculty regarding the effects of student academic entitlement behavior.

### Section 3: The Project

This doctoral study was designed to understand what faculty perceived as the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior and to identify strategies needed to decrease the behavior. The findings of the study are provided in a practical application or an “artifact” (Walden University, n.d. p. 8). The analyzed qualitative data collected from the research study’s participants are presented in the selected genre of the project, a position paper (Appendix A). It is intended that the position paper will serve as a catalyst for discussion among the institution’s administration and faculty regarding student academic entitlement behavior. Section 3 of this doctoral study presents the life cycle of the project, which includes initiation, execution, and evaluation.

#### **Description and Goals**

A position paper was selected as the project for this study because the general goal of a position paper is to argue an identified position or to recommend a solution to a problem. Furthermore, the intention of a position paper is to “generate support on an issue” (Xavier University Library, 2014, para. 1). Based upon the findings of this study, the position taken suggests that the institutional actions that endorse a student-centered philosophy encourage student academic entitlement behavior. Consequently, numerous stakeholders are negatively affected. The proposed solution, based upon the recommendations of the study’s participants, is to adopt a learning-focused philosophy to help diminish student academic entitlement behavior.

Having determined the problem and the proposed solution, the goal of the position paper can be identified. The predominant goal of the paper is to bring attention to the issue of student academic entitlement behavior, which is negatively affecting the institutional community. The faculty suggested that entitlement behavior is present within contemporary society and have identified specific sociological influences that have aided in the development of entitlement tendencies within some communities. These developed tendencies have caused some students to enter the university environment with predispositions for entitled behavior. Furthermore, the faculty suggested that there are specific institutional practices and policies that reinforce and encourage student academic entitlement behavior. Presenting the faculty's concerns to the administration could assist in initiating a discussion focused on the institutional community's opportunities to embrace a learning-focused environment that could curtail student academic entitlement behavior.

### **Rationale**

A position paper is generally constructed to “generate support on an issue” (Xavier University Library, 2014, para. 1) and serves as a “foundation to build resolution to difficult problems” (Study Guides, 2012, para. 1). Historically, the term *white paper* was used in conjunction with official government reports, “indicating that the document is authoritative and informative in nature.” Such documents were used to present an unambiguous position or recommendations to resolve a problem (Purdue Owl, 2015, para. 1). Today, the genre of position or white papers is recognized as “a persuasive

essay that uses facts and logic to promote a certain product, service or viewpoint”

(Graham, 2015, para. 9).

A position paper was selected as an advocacy device to present the perspectives of the faculty regarding student academic entitlement behavior. The position paper identifies, based upon the data collected during the study, the faculty perceptions of the causes and implications of academic entitlement behavior and offers their recommendations for actions needed to curtail the behavior within the classroom environment and across the institution. A position paper is used to “advocate” (Purdue Owl, 2015, para. 2) or “promote” a certain position via “facts and logic” (Graham, 2015, para. 9), making it an ideal approach to assist in reaching the goal of the current project.

### **Review of the Literature**

This literature review maintains two objectives. The first is to demonstrate why a position paper is an applicable approach for presenting the final project of this doctoral study. The second objective of this literature review is to affirm the findings of the study that are presented in the final project. In order to meet both objectives of the current review of literature, specific electronic databases, housed within the Walden University Library, were searched. Additionally, searches within Google and Google Scholar were performed. As the current literature review has two different goals, the performed searches differed and will be presented in detail below.

### **Support for Using a Position Paper**

The current literature review to support the selection of a position paper began within Google Scholar. Boolean phrases within Google Scholar included *position paper*,

*white paper, and position paper AND higher education*, yet they yielded no results that provided resources that defined the objective of a position paper. Although the results list did not include any valuable resources regarding the purpose or structural expectations, the search results did provide an abundant amount of published position papers. These published papers were reviewed to allow the researcher to observe successful strategies for articulation and presentation (Getzel, 2014; Milligan, Littlejohn, & Margaryan, 2013).

Searches using the same keywords and Boolean phrases as previously identified were performed within electronic databases located within the Walden University Library. Three databases, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, and ERIC, were searched. To further truncate the search results, the phrase position paper was limited to the title of the article and publication date limitations were set between 2010 and 2015. Similar to the Google Scholar results, the returned resources were published position papers rather than resources that defined the purpose and structural expectations of a position paper. Sample papers were also reviewed to observe successful strategies (see King, Aguinaga, O'Brien, Young, & Zgonc, 2010; Schultz, 2014).

A similar search, using the keywords and phrases *position paper, white paper, and position paper AND higher education*, within the search engine Google yielded numerous results. The search results included resources which provided information regarding the genre's working definitions, synonymous description terms, historical overviews, contemporary purposes, and suggested audiences. Information within the

found resources indicated that the terms position paper and white paper are synonymous (Graham, 2015). For the purpose of this literature review, the two terms may be used interchangeably.

In both historical and contemporary settings, the color of the paper or its covering is significant. It is suggested that white papers evolved from 19th century British utilization of blue papers, which were legislative documents that were to be officially presented and discussed among the members of Parliament. If the content within the document was “too light or informal” then the paper would be bound with a white cover, rather than a blue cover (Klariti, 2013). This color differentiation identified a “position paper with white covers” from “policy books with blue covers” (Graham, 2015, para. 36). To further distinguish the intensity level of the included content or to offer additional policy recommendations, some government institutions have developed green papers (Klariti, 2013; BBC News, 2008). A green paper is a government document in which “policy proposals for debate and discussion” are presented before the final decision regarding the policy is made (BBC News, 2008, para. 1).

The term *white paper* emerged as common verbiage in the 20th century after the publication of the now named Churchill White Paper in 1922 written by Winston Churchill, then Great Britain’s Secretary of State for the Colonies. Although white papers are still aligned to issues for discussion and debate among governmental members, using white papers has expanded into various markets, including business, technology, and education (Klariti, 2013; Purdue Owl, 2015).



The purpose of a position paper is to “advocate” that certain perceptions could present a sound solution for a specific problem (Purdue Owl, 2015, para. 2). In preparing a position paper, the researcher sought to present the perceptions of the university’s faculty concerning the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior and communicate their recommendations for actions that the institutional community could enact to help curtail the behavior. Ultimately, the single overarching goal of the study’s project is to initiate a discussion among the research site’s stakeholders of administration and faculty regarding student academic entitlement behavior. Consequently, a position paper is an appropriate platform to aid in achieving the goal of the project.

### **Student Academic Entitlement Behavior: Effects and Solutions**

The second objective of the current literature review was to present evidence from recent literature that supports the current study’s findings that are presented in the position paper. Searches were conducted within specific electronic databases located within the Walden University Library, which included Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, ERIC, and SAGE Premier. To have a determinate search, specific keywords and Boolean applications were utilized. The search keywords and phrases included: *student academic entitlement behavior, faculty perception, student consumerism, student as customer, retention, learning-centered environment, learning-focused environment, institutional paradigm, faculty development, effective communication, and higher education*. The Boolean operator *AND* was utilized to connect two or more keywords or key phrases together in a single search. An example of

this strategy is as follows: *student academic entitlement behavior AND student consumerism*. To further focus the search parameters, each search was limited to resources published between 2010 and 2015. Finally, when using the identified electronic databases, the option to retrieve only scholarly or peer reviewed journals was also activated. Saturation of the literature was achieved when studies were repeatedly referenced.

Based on the results of this research study, the faculty acknowledged the presence of student academic entitlement behavior within the institutional environment. They believe that while the behavior is often learned from external influences, there are institutional reinforcements that are encouraging and enabling the behavior to remain present within the university environment. As identified by the faculty, the effects of the behavior presents with it negative implications. To assist in curtailing the behavior, the faculty's proposed solutions to curtail the behavior that embrace philosophies of a learning-focused environment.

The current literature review is comprised of three sections. The literature review includes a brief overview of the construct, affirming the study's findings to the definition of student academic entitlement behavior. The second section also focuses on the role of student consumerism within higher education to link the study's findings to the perceived internal actions of the institutional community that reinforces or enables the behavior. The final section of the literature review concentrates on a learning-centered organizational culture, which reflects a universal approach to inhibit the behavior, as suggested by the study's participants.

**Student Academic Entitlement Behavior.** Within the current literature, there have been at least six attempts to measure student academic entitlement behavior (see Achacoso, 2002; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger et al., 2008; Kopp et al., 2008; Miller, 2013; Walsieleski, Whatley, Brihl, & Branscome, 2014). The findings within these studies presented overlaps within the results and substantial variances. Although the quantitative measure of student academic entitlement behavior is outside the scope of this study, these measurements are noteworthy, as they affirm the existence of the behavior within the environment of higher education and the growing interest among researchers to further understand the construct.

The current study utilized two construct definitions found within current literature to help frame its rationalization. Chowning and Campbell (2009) defined academic entitlement behavior as the propensity for some students “to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success” (p. 982). Beyond Chowning and Campbell’s perception of diminished responsibility, Singleton-Jackson et al. (2011) suggested that an entitled student will expect the faculty to go “beyond their obligation of providing educational opportunities and effective, quality instruction” (p. 232).

Although definitions from recent literature were utilized to help understand the construct outside the scope of the current study, one of the guiding research questions was to understand how the participants defined student academic entitlement behavior. In summation, the participants described student academic entitlement behavior as a student’s lack of understanding of his or her roles and responsibilities within an

educational environment, leading to the manifestation of inappropriate behavior and unrealistic expectations, which ultimately engenders a negative impact on the learning experience. Jackson, Singleton-Jackson, and Frey (2011) suggested that “the entitled student not only feels that he or she deserves something they did not achieve, but that they fail to comprehend their role in, or accept responsibility for falling short of, the academic achievement” (p. 54).

These findings are in alignment with the study’s conceptual framework in which Morrow (1994) suggested that when “entitlement presupposes achievement,” (p. 35) valid success in a learning environment is threatened. Anderson, Halberstadt, and Aitken (2013) affirmed that students who presented with a greater sense of academic entitlement behavior earned “poorer final exam marks” (p. 151) due to the students’ failure to “exert effort when it [was] required” (p. 156). Goodboy and Frisby (2014) study of how students’ learning receptiveness forecasted the use of “instructional dissent” indicated that students who communicate with either “expressive or vengeful dissent tend to have academic orientations comprised of academic entitlement” behavior (p. 104). It is suggested that these “students believe they deserve high grades, [and] care more about the grades they receive rather than what they learn” (p. 105). Jackson et al. (2011) further suggested that academic entitlement behavior can possibly “damage the value of the university education” and that the “attitudes can erode the value of the achievement” of earning the degree through various institutional actions, “such as over-simplifying course content or awarding points for non-achievement outcomes” (p. 53). Zinn (2012) affirmed the concerns expressed by Jackson et al. when she suggested that “teachers may

be unintentionally feeding that sense of entitlement” (as cited in Sparks, 2012, para. 2).

Similar concerns emerged within the findings of the current study.

**Student as the Customer in Higher Education.** Consumerism within higher education is not a new phenomenon (Maringe, 2010, p. 147). Students of the elite “medieval universities” were essentially consumers, as they were “receptacles, receiving the wisdom of their teachers in a give and take relationship” (p. 147). During the period of the Enlightenment (seventeenth and eighteenth centuries), industrial evolution increased the demand for formally educated members of society, and with this, the “fundamental equation of life became more education, more life opportunities” (p. 147). In the centuries since, the acceptance of the “fundamental equation” has strengthened. Contemporary higher education institutions have responded to the demands to offer academic programs that aid in the betterment of society. Although the commodification of higher education is occurring, research suggests that identifying students as customers can have negative implications (Fairchild & Cragge, 2014; Maringe, 2010; Miller, 2010).

With the number of degree granting institutions in the free-market environment of the United States increasing (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), the decline in government funding, which is expected to be at zero percent by 2059 (Mortenson, 2012, para. 2), and the growing presence of international tertiary institutions (Slaughter & Cantwell, 2011), it is reasonable to assume that the competition to admit and retain students has also increased. Embracing, or perhaps encouraging this competitive market, President Obama, in his 2009 State of the Union Address to the U.S. Congress, established a goal for America to “have the highest proportion of college graduates in the

world” by 2020 (Obama, 2009). Three years later, encouraging the competitive market in his 2012 State of the Union Address, he reminded the congressional leaders and citizenry of the U.S. that “higher education can’t be a luxury—it is an economic imperative” (Obama, 2012). Some evidence suggests that the growing intensity of competition within the higher education marketplace has brought forth “student consumerism,” the belief that “because students are paying for their education, they deserve to be treated as customers” (Cain et al., 2012, para. 5).

With this intense competition, higher education as a “service” to the community has become “commodified,” and “the institutions that provide [the services] tend to become more focused on customer service” (Fairchild & Cragg, 2014, p. 403). Throughout the environment of higher education, the concept of the student as the customer has become deeply engrained into the “cognitive model of how colleges and students relate to one another” (Kreuter, 2014, para. 3). However, this model brings forth negative consequences within higher education.

Within the customer relationship there is a financial exchange with the provider for goods or services (Maringe, 2010, p. 146). Educational institutions are the producers of a service and the students are the receivers of that service (Wattjatrakul, 2013, p. 676). Due to the “declining state support for higher education” (Mortenson, 2012, para. 28), students are “more directly responsible” (Maringe, 2010, p. 146) for paying for institutional tuition and fees. Consequentially, students believe that “they have a greater right in how they are taught, how they are assessed, and the overall quality of the services they are entitled to on campus” (Maringe, 2010, p. 146).

As Schings (2009) discovered, the students “who considered themselves as university customers were more likely to feel entitled” (as cited in Menon & Sharland, 2011, p. 51). This entitlement may manifest itself within the academic environment (Kopp & Finney, 2013), essentially affecting the learning opportunities because the student-customers “view themselves as outside the learning process” (Fairchild & Crage, 2014, p. 405). The student-customers desire to effortlessly and comfortably receive the service or the product rather than assume the role of an active participant in a learning-focused community (p. 405).

Endorsing a student as a customer philosophy also strains the student-teacher relationship (Fairchild & Crage, 2014; Watjatrakul, 2013). Rather than challenging and encouraging their students to experience and embrace learning opportunities, faculty are “expected to please students” and keep them happy and complaint-free. Acknowledging this paradigm, some faculty may focus on what the students want rather than on what the students need to learn, encouraging some students to view their teacher as a casual role of buddy or peer, rather than an educator (Watjatrakul, 2013, p. 679). In the role of the entertainer, teacher indifference or forthcoming student or administrative responses from challenging events may “lead to irresponsible practices such as encouraging grade inflation and ignoring violations of academic integrity. Thus, both students and faculty members are set up for failure” (Clift, 2011, para. 9). Consequentially, if a teacher maintains high standards, in a student as a customer environment, some students respond with actions of incivility, “lack of respect, and blame” (para. 8). Clift further maintains

that such actions (e.g., student incivility, faculty indifference, etc.) are “fueled by absence of clear standards from the administration (para. 8).

Further consequences of the student as customer philosophy can be seen in the admissions and retention efforts of an institution. As a result of the decline in higher education funding (e.g., state funding, endowments) and the increase in market share competition, it is reasonable to assume that institutions dedicate valuable resources to recruit and retain students. Cain et al. (2012) suggested that the various services made available to students (e.g., student support, academic advising, financial aid advising, tutoring centers, peer mentors, career services) may “inadvertently reverse students’ perception of who the authority is in professional-student relations. Students may not differentiate between student services and the core educational process.” Students, in struggling to differentiate between the various components of the educational system may begin to adopt the “business mantra that ‘the customer is always right,’” ultimately challenging and distorting the roles of the student and the faculty (para. 11). Cain et al. further posited extreme efforts to retain or “catering to students” who are not “motivated or inherently suited” for the professions that align to their degree field propagates the concept that the student is the customer, and that he or she can demand that the rules “be bent to maintain their satisfaction” (para. 13).

When considering the relationship between student as customer and institutional culture and practices, the opportunity to incorporate supportive literature is challenged. The current literature regarding the relationship between institutional culture and practices and student academic entitlement behavior is, at best, limited. Advanced



searches within Google Scholar, ERIC, Education Search Complete, and Academic Search Complete, using truncating techniques to specify the focus of the result, returned one article and one published doctoral study. Of the two resources, none focused primarily on the relationship between institutional culture and student academic entitlement behavior, but suggested, as previously discussed, that specific policies, institutional philosophies, and the actions of both faculty and staff are reinforcing student academic entitlement behavior (Cain et al., 2013).

**Learning Centered Organizational Culture.** Historically, the faculty member's principal responsibility was to "transmit a body of knowledge" to the student population (Berrett, 2014, para. 1). This transmission traditionally took place in lecture format. The students were strategically arranged to allow his or her attention to focus solely on the teacher. This classroom arrangement suggested that the teacher was the "featured act in a show" and was "the only one in the room doing anything worth paying attention to" (para. 2). The students were often times "required to assume a passive learning role" as the teacher provided the lecture (Stefaniak & Tracey, 2015, p. 97). It was expected that students arrive to class, having completed all assigned readings, and prepared to take copious notes throughout the provided lecture (p. 97). However, in 1995, Robert Barr and John Tagg encouraged the higher education community to consider a paradigm shift in which the focus is not "what the instructor does" but rather "what the students learn" (Mostrom & Blumberg, 2012, p. 398). They advocated for a new approach in which institutions would no longer strive "to provide instruction," but rather "produce learning" (para. 1).

This learning-centered paradigm would initiate a new approach in which each member of the institutional community, faculty, staff/administration, and students, is responsible for producing learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995, para. 14). At the foundation, the mission of the institution within this paradigm is to engender learning (para. 13). Faculty are responsible for creating “environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves.” New opportunities to reinforce the mission to produce learning are “identified, developed, tested, implemented, and assessed against each other,” affording the faculty the continuous cycle of professional development (para. 17). The students become the “co-producers of learning” and assume the “responsibility for their own learning” (para. 14). Ultimately, the goal within this learning-focused environment is “success,” not just “access” (para. 18).

Empirical evidence regarding the benefits of a learning-focused or learning-centered approach within higher education is present in current literature (Henning, 2012; Mostrom & Blumber, 2012). Stefaniak and Tracey (2015) suggested that students benefit from a learning-focused environment due to its focus on pertinent learning opportunities. Students were found to be more active in participating in class projects and assignments (p. 108). Students also reported an increased level of satisfaction with the course content due to the class environment in which classroom discussions and relevant group projects were encouraged (p. 109).

Stefaniak and Tracey’s (2015) findings also reported higher earned scores on course assignments. The construct of grade inflation has remained present within academic literature for the past thirty years and some research suggested that grade

inflation “could lower the effectiveness and credibility of higher education and its graduates” (Mostom & Blumberg, 2012, p. 398). However, some evidence suggests that the increase in grade point averages is not the result of grade inflation, but rather the result of “grade improvement” (p. 398). The upward trajectory of recorded grades may be the result of an increase in faculty members participating in faculty development opportunities to discuss learning-focused methodology and instructional design applications (p. 398). Further evidence suggests a positive correlation between services that support students’ needs (e.g., tutoring center, career center, wellness center) and “grade improvement” (p. 398).

Embracing a learning-centered paradigm that entails a high level of engagement may require “a great deal of institutional collaboration” (Henning, 2012, p. 16). Consequentially, understanding the culture and embracing a “shared vision” of the institution is imperative. Finch, Burrell Walker, Rahim, and Dawson (2010) suggested that “organizational rigidity [is] an impediment to organizational learning” (p. 43). Embracing a tradition of a “shared vision” encourages the development of “genuine commitment and enrollments rather than compliance.” Members of the organization often embrace “collaborative thinking, problem solving, and learning through a common team directional map” (p. 43).

Through the use of supporting documentation and current literature, the purpose of position papers and the effects and solutions of student academic entitlement behavior have been demonstrated. The resources regarding position papers demonstrated why a position paper is an effective genre to present the study’s findings to the research site’s

stakeholders. The literature also affirmed the emerged themes of the study regarding student consumerism in higher education and the benefits of a learning-centered organizational culture.

### **Implementation**

The project genre selected for this doctoral study was a position paper. Based on the findings of the study and supported by empirical data from current literature, the fundamental goal of the paper is to bring attention to the issue of student academic entitlement behavior, which is negatively affecting the institutional community. To effectively communicate the concerns and recommendations of the faculty, the position paper includes the following: an introduction; a description of the problem; discussion of a student-centered environment; recommendations/strengths of a learning-focused environment; and a conclusion.

The position paper is the “deliverable” of this project (Kennelly, 2014, para. 5). In keeping with the overarching goal of this project, which is to initiate a discussion regarding the presence of student academic entitlement behavior at the university, potential resources, current support, and potential barriers must be considered. These factors affect the implementation plan and ultimately the success or failure of the study’s “artifact,” the position paper.

### **Potential Resources and Existing Support**

In preparation for implementation, the needed resources and existing support for the project should be considered. Commonly used technologies (e.g., email, Adobe reader) are required to distribute and access the position paper. Furthermore, time, which

could be perceived as a precious commodity, will be a needed resource for some stakeholders reviewing the paper. Currently, the level of support for this position paper is unknown. In September 2014, when permission to conduct the study at the research site was granted, the institution's interest in the study's findings was assumed by the researcher. Recent support was communicated by the faculty participants of the study. All twelve participants expressed their interest in the study's findings and their hope that the findings would initiate a discussion between the university's administration and faculty regarding the perceived effects that student academic entitlement behavior has on the institutional community.

### **Potential Barriers**

There are potential barriers that could affect implementation of the project. A potential barrier of the project may be the refusal of the executive administration to review and consider the findings presented in the position paper. Such a decision would not allow for the dissemination of the paper to the institutional faculty community. A second potential barrier would require acknowledging the effect of the phenomenon. Currently, there have not been any indicators to suggest that student academic entitlement behavior is a priority requiring the attention of the university's administration. Furthermore, no indicators to suggest the administration's desire to amend the current endorsement of a student as a customer philosophy were expressed by the study's participants.

Nevertheless, these barriers are, in fact, potential barriers. Their existence has not been quantified, thus presenting an opportunity for advancement towards achieving the

project's goal. It is logical to assume that if the faculty perceive a behavior that they believe negatively affects the university, the administration would want to be informed of the faculty's concerns. Resultantly, if the perceptions of the faculty regarding student academic entitlement behavior are shared with the administration, then these potential barriers may not be barriers at all.

### **Proposal for Implementation Plan and Timetable**

The research study's final project, a position paper, will be implemented in accordance to the following plan:

- The position paper will be sent by electronic mail, as a PDF, to the research site's Director of Institutional Effectiveness and the twelve study participants.
  - Note: The Director of Institutional Effectiveness is identified as a recipient, as he was the researcher's primary point of contact at the research site throughout the study.
- In order to continue to maintain confidentiality, the emails will be sent individually. The email will include a message that provides a brief description of the purpose of the doctoral study, the purpose of the position paper, and requests that the reader to review the position paper and offer applicable feedback.
  - Due to the complex nature of the position paper, which recommends institutional cultural and policy changes, a formative evaluation of the paper will provide "valuable diagnostic information" (Greenstein, 2010, para. 14) of the paper's tone and alignment to the current

institutional environment. It should be anticipated that, due to the noted complexities, there may be multiple cycles of peer assessment and subsequent updates of the position paper.

- Once the formative evaluation of the position paper is complete, the final document will be sent via email as a PDF attachment to the Provost and Chief Executive Officer.
- It is anticipated that the Provost and Chief Executive Officer will submit the position paper to the university's President and Chancellor for review. As key drivers in this project, the President and Chancellor will determine whether or not the position paper is disseminated for faculty and administration review.
- If the President and Chancellor have determined the position paper appropriate for distribution, the faculty and administration will receive a hard copy of the position paper two weeks prior to the annual faculty retreat. The recipients are encouraged to review and reflect upon the issues and opportunities presented and are invited to attend the scheduled roundtable session at the upcoming faculty retreat.

### **Roles and Responsibilities of Student and Others**

The overarching purpose of presenting the study's findings in a position paper is to bring attention to the topic of student academic entitlement behavior. The primary goal of this paper is to initiate the discussion between faculty and administration concerning how student academic entitlement behavior is negatively affecting the institutional community. The faculty wish to inform the administration of their concerns

regarding specific institutional practices that reinforce and encourage student academic entitlement behavior. The faculty would also like to identify potential institutional practices that embrace a learning-focused environment, which could curtail student academic entitlement behavior. The stakeholders of this project are present throughout the institutional community and include the faculty, administration, and students. As a stakeholder, each member of the institutional community maintains a personal responsibility to abate the manifestations of student academic entitlement behavior, and, in doing so, could reverse the perceived negative effects of the behavior.

### **Project Evaluation**

The overarching goal of the current study's final project is to initiate a discussion among the research site's stakeholders of administration and faculty regarding the effects of student academic entitlement behavior. In order to initiate a discussion, the position paper presents three themes that emerged from the data collection in the current study. The position paper identifies the negative impact of student academic entitlement behavior, which has been observed at the research site, but is currently a topic of limited discussion. The faculty want to inform the research site's administration of their concerns regarding specific institutional practices that encourage or reinforce student academic entitlement behavior and to present opportunities that embrace efforts that could curtail student academic entitlement behavior.

Recognizing the potential barriers and the overarching goal of the position paper, the evaluation of the project will be formative in nature. Nan (2003) defined formative evaluation as "an assessment of efforts prior to their completion for the purpose of



improving the efforts” (para. 2). The application of a formative evaluation approach may present the practitioner with opportunities to reconsider his or her current strategy (para. 3).

In order to complete a formative evaluation of the project, members of the administration and faculty will be asked to review and evaluate the position paper. The recommended institutional cultural and policy changes that have been identified within the position paper incorporate a level of complexity into the implementation of this project. As a result of this complexity, a formative evaluation of the paper will allow for any unexpected outcomes to be addressed before it is submitted to the Chief Executive Officer and Provost. When considering the institutional environment, a formative assessment will help to detect “what works, what doesn’t, and why” throughout the position paper while ensuring that the perceptions and recommendations of the faculty are presented to the administration with sensitivity (Community Sustainability, 2010, para. 6).

Ultimately, the success of the current project resides in the administration’s desire to initiate a conversation about student academic entitlement behavior with the university’s faculty. The project will be considered a success if the executive administration affords the opportunity for such a discussion with the university’s faculty to take place, as identified in the final step of the implementation plan.

### **Implications Embracing Social Change**

Generally defined as “the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success” (Chowning &

Campbell, 2009, p.982), the phenomenon of student academic entitlement behavior established a presence within academic research during the latter part of the twentieth century (Delucchi & Smith, 1997; Morrow, 1994). As a result of the institutional and academic impacts from the corporatization of higher education and interest in generational behavior, which includes the unique characteristics displayed by traditional students and adult learners, an interest in the phenomenon has continued throughout the early twenty-first century (Boretz, 2004; Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008; Kopp & Finney, 2013; Lippmann et al., 2009). Academic research and anecdotal evidence suggest that the effects of student academic entitlement behavior are present not only within the institution but also within the higher education community.

Implications of student academic entitlement behavior suggested within current literature include student incivility (Kopp & Kinney, 2013) and grade inflation (Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011). In the current study, Participant 2 affirmed her perception of the correlation between student incivility and student academic entitlement behavior. She provided an example, stating:

a student comes to class every day and does nothing but get on their cell phone and play or they are texting or they are doing Facebook on the computer or something like that. Why I see that as a form of entitlement is because if I ask the student to put that away because it is disturbing someone else, their attitude is very much this is what I want to do right now and you can't do anything about it.

The relationship between grade inflation and student academic entitlement behavior was also identified in the current study. Participant 12 expressed that “a lot of faculty will

bend to the student's complaint just so they don't have a grade overturned by the academic council and we have to stop that."

Further implications that extend beyond the institution include the surrounding community of stakeholders, specifically employers that seek to hire the graduates of the institution. Participant 4 shared her concerns of the phenomenon's impact to both the university's reputation and the companies within the community. She stated:

If we do give in to the sense of entitlement and pass students along who are really marginal students, in the long run those students are going to go out into the workforce and get a job and when that company knows that they earned their degree from [Research Site] University they'll never hire another [Research Site] graduate. For companies that pay tuition benefits, they certainly wouldn't pay to send their employees there to earn a degree.

The principal goal of the current research study's final project is to initiate an honest and open discussion among the research site's stakeholders, both administration and faculty, regarding the effects of student academic entitlement behavior. Through the position paper, which was based on the research findings, it is anticipated that the executive administration, in receiving this position paper, will recognize the faculty's concerns regarding the issue of student academic entitlement behavior. Ultimately, the final goal of the project is to present the faculty's suggestions that endorse a learning-focused environment, in which all stakeholders are responsible for the success through learning, as a manner in which student academic entitlement behavior could be curtailed.

This study and its final project endorse Walden University's attention to social change by identifying the faculty's perceptions of the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior and providing their recommended strategies to decrease the behavior. Unlike studies in the past, this study has focused on the perceptions of university faculty regarding student academic entitlement behavior. Its implications are aligned both to the institutional community and to the community at large. The institutional community gains the opportunity to have an honest and open discussion about the effects of student academic entitlement behavior. However, according to the study's participants, it seems to be unacknowledged or minimally acknowledged by the administration. Initiating a discussion about student academic entitlement, specifically as it relates to institutional actions that reinforce the behavior, could result in a positive social and academic change across the university's community.

The potential social and academic changes could include the eventual endorsement of a learning-focused philosophy that, in turn, may have a positive social change on not only the institution but also the surrounding communities. Incorporating a learning-focused ethos may have a positive impact on the students, faculty, and staff/administration, as the institution's community understands, acknowledges, and adheres to their responsibilities for learning success (Barr & Tagg, 1995; O'Banion, 2009). With the potential for an open discussion of academic entitlement at this university, the possibility of positive social change could exist. Ultimately, even a greater sensitivity to this problem could be a result of this position paper. The outcomes

of this study could provide helpful information to other schools experiencing the problem.

### **Conclusion**

In this section, an overview of the final project was presented. Providing rationale for the selected medium of the project, a position paper, supporting documentation was presented in the form of a literature review. The goals of the final project, the implementation plan and timeline, and the potential barriers of the project were also stated. Evidence substantiating the findings of the current study and the position taken within the final project were also provided in the review of literature. The overview provided within Section 3 concluded with the suggested implications of the study and the final project.

The final section of the study will present personal reflections. Section 4 will focus specifically on the strengths, limitations, and implications of the completed project. Personal reflections as a project developer, leader, scholar, and practitioner are offered. Finally, opportunities for future research regarding student academic entitlement behavior are presented.

## Section 4: Reflections and Conclusions

In the final section of the study, the researcher offers her reflections as they relate to the project's strengths, limitations, and opportunities. Further reflections regarding the researcher's personal growth as a scholar, practitioner, and avid proponent of higher education are provided. Finally, recommendations for future research are provided, as well as a discussion regarding the research finding's potential effect on positive social change.

### **Project Strength and Limitation**

The strength and limitation of this project are worth highlighting. The strength of the project is that its subject matter is highly relevant and unique in its presented perspective. Though the strength of the project is the relevancy of its content, the limitation of the project is the method in which the content is delivered. Both the strength and the limitation of the project are addressed.

### **Project Strength**

Student academic entitlement behavior is present within higher education (Cain et al., 2012; Finney & Finney, 2010). This current presence of the phenomenon lends itself to the relevancy of the current project, which is its primary strength. Guided by the framework of Morrow's (1994) findings that suggested that student academic entitlement behavior is negatively impacting the epistemological gain of students, the growing concern surrounding student academic entitlement behavior is reflected within contemporary academic literature (Anderson et al., 2013; Holdford, 2014). Compounding the strength of the project is the gap in academic literature. Currently,

academic research has focused on the perspectives of the students and not the perspectives of the faculty. The project's presentation of the faculty's perspectives of the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior is an additional factor in the project's relevancy.

### **Project Limitation**

The limitation of the project is its selected genre. Position papers are designed to be "clear and concise" (Ellen, 2013, para. 3). However, even with this strategic focus, it is logical to assume that the project may not receive any attention from the recipients. It is also reasonable to suggest that even if the project receives the attention of its recipients, it may not receive their endorsement and support.

### **Recommendations for Remediation of Limitation**

As previously noted, the limitation of this project is the utilization of a position paper as the project type. It is through the acknowledgement and reflection of this limitation that opportunities to remediate it can be considered. The reasons as to why the project might not receive attention or support could depend on the culture of the institution. As Tierney (2008) suggested, the culture of each university is unique. Higher education institutions are "influenced by powerful, external factors such as demographic, economic, and political conditions, yet they are also shaped by strong forces that emanate from within" (p. 24), ultimately resulting in a unique culture. It is reasonable to suggest that the culture of the institution must be considered when attempting to predict the level of attention and support the position paper would receive from its initial recipients, the executive leadership.

The accompanied challenge of utilizing a position paper as the medium of delivery jeopardizes the opportunity for endorsement and implementation of the project's identified recommendations. To assist in circumventing this possibility, before the delivery of the project, it is recommended that its investigator establish communication with an initial point of contact. This initial contact may assist the investigator in recognizing elements of the institutional culture and determine an effective approach strategy.

However, if establishing a line of communication is not possible, to remediate the limitation of the project, it is possible to revert back to the project strengths. The subject of this project is highly relevant, and, due to the project's unique focus on the perspectives of faculty, it is logical to suggest that there may be a level of interest in the project, regardless of its format, ultimately remediating its identified limitation.

### **Recommendations for Alternative Approaches**

When reflecting upon the limitation of the project and opportunities regarding how to remediate the limitation, one should also consider an alternative approach as it relates to the entirety of the project. An alternative approach of the project is to create a professional development session that presents an opportunity to initiate a discussion among the faculty and administration about student academic entitlement behavior. Professional development is "the development of a person in his or her professional role" (Quattlebaum, 2012, para. 3), and when it is completed effectively it assists in the improvement of "institutional practices" and utilization of pedagogical or andragogical methods (deNoyelles, Cobb, & Lowe, 2012, p. 85). For the purpose of this project, the



professional development's two objectives would be (a) initiating a discussion about student academic entitlement behavior and (b) developing, as an institutional community, a plan of action to address the behavior.

The design of this alternative approach would adhere to the five principles of effective professional development, as defined by the Center for Public Education (Gulamhussein, 2013, p. 14). These principles recommend that professional development are (a) "significant and ongoing"; (b) allow for support during implementation; (c) is presented in an active and engaging manner; (d) includes opportunities for modeling; (e) and specific to the institutional environment (pp. 14–17). Remaining focused on these principles would help ensure that the professional development meets its objectives.

Through this professional development opportunity, the participants would "not learn in isolation, but rather socially through a community of peers" allowing them to "interact and collaborate, sharing ideas and practices, and reflecting on outcomes" (deNoyelles, Cobb, & Lowe, 2012, p. 86). Offering this type of professional development might also assist members of the institutional community that observe and define student academic entitlement behavior in a different context (e.g., Department of Financial Aid, Student Services, Tutoring Center) to participate in the discussion that seeks to identify a plan of action to address the behavior. As a result of a successful professional development session, "this community will provide support beyond the scope of the professional development course" (p. 86).

### **Scholarship**

Within Section 2 of this study the researcher's specific beliefs regarding the phenomenon of student academic entitlement behavior were disclosed. Originally, it was noted that student academic entitlement behavior is present and increasing within higher education. Empirical evidence presented in this study and anecdotal evidence that emerged during the course of this study through conversations with friends and colleagues, all within the higher education community, reaffirmed my previously disclosed belief concerning the construct. I also disclosed that I believed there to be universal causes and implications of the phenomenon, as described in the conceptual framework that guided this study. Essentially, Morrow's (1994) framework suggested that student academic entitlement behavior negatively affects learning. Ultimately, I continue to agree with this position and was pleased that the findings of the current study qualitatively supported Morrow's observation. Finally, I initially suggested that efforts made by all members of the institutional community can positively enact change in such a way that the negative elements associated with student academic entitlement behavior will diminish. Supporting evidence from the study's participants suggests that this is attainable; however, the true test of the viability of this goal rests within actions of the executive administration.

### **Project Development and Evaluation**

The project of this study was a position paper focused on faculty perceptions of student academic entitlement behavior. The position paper was specifically aligned to how institutional practices and procedures encourage the behavior and offered faculty

recommendations to impede the behavior. Taking the project through its life cycle, brought with it many great lessons learned.

Initiating the project presented the first opportunity to develop as a scholar, researcher, and project developer. I had to determine which project form would most effectively convey the perceptions of the participants. After extensive research of scholarly literature and reflecting upon the data collected during the study, it was clear that a position paper was the most appropriate project genre for this study.

Once the genre was determined, extensive planning to effectively execute the project was required. Careful consideration of the “purpose and scope” (MPMM, 2015, para. 7) of the project resulted in strategic planning and eventual execution. However, even with effective project development strategies, tactical revisions were required. The necessity to consider and apply various revisions required me to think even more critically about the construct of student academic entitlement behavior and how it impacted the research site and the higher education community.

Developing an effective formative evaluation plan also required revision. The position paper recommended institutional cultural and policy changes which incorporated a level of complexity into the implementation of this project. Due to this complexity, a formative evaluation of the paper will allow for any unexpected outcomes to be addressed before it is submitted to the Chief Executive Officer and Provost. The evaluation plan requests members of the institutional community to review the position paper. The feedback provided during formative evaluation is “comprehensible, actionable, and relevant” (Greenstein, 2010, para. 14). Because formative evaluation is

performed before a project is implemented, it should be anticipated that there may be several cycles of peer evaluation and applied updates to help further strengthen the position paper (para. 17). Furthermore, the information gathered from the evaluation cycles will provide a “valuable diagnostic” (Greenstein, 2010, para. 14) of the project to determine if it is ready for dissemination to the university’s Chief Executive Officer and Provost.

The final stage of project development, “closure” (MPMM, 2015, para. 13), has not occurred yet. However, preparing for this stage during which the position paper will be sent to the executive stakeholders at the research site has required me to consider effective evaluation strategies to ensure that the position paper is transparent in its reflection of the participants’ perceptions and recommendations. Furthermore, due to the complexities of the content, it is important that the paper is sensitive to the current culture of the institution.

### **Leadership and Change**

Throughout my research regarding student academic entitlement behavior, numerous themes emerged. Themes reflecting catalytic factors inside and outside the institutional boundaries emerged. For some themes, the thematic emergence was within the scholarly literature and then suggested by the study participants. Other themes emerged during the study’s data analysis. In addition to the empirical evidence that was gathered, anecdotal evidence was continuously presented to me throughout this process. Colleagues and associates, upon learning of the focus of this study, offered their personal experiences in addressing issues related to student academic entitlement behavior.

Understanding the presence of the behavior and its impact on an institutional community has reaffirmed my interest in discovering and effectively communicating additional evidence regarding the construct. Such evidence could offer additional research-based solutions to inhibit the behavior and inhibit institutional communities from responding to the behavior in a manner that challenges the academic prowess of the higher education community.

### **Analysis of Self as Scholar and Practitioner**

The doctoral program in Higher Education Leadership at Walden University was selected by the researcher for various reasons. Aside from a personal requirement that the selected institution be regionally accredited, Walden's mission to "effect positive social change" (Walden University, 2015) aligned with my personal and professional philosophies. Additionally, as a higher education faculty member having never experienced an online course as a student, I desired to understand the experience of my own students; thus, selecting an institution in which online classes were the primary delivery format. Finally, the unique component of the doctoral study, the project, was a factor in selecting Walden. Although it added a tremendous amount of time to the overall doctoral study, having the opportunity to create a practical application of the study's findings was intriguing in the sense that interest in the problem that initiated the study would move closer to a solution.

Throughout the completion of the core curriculum, the doctoral study, and position paper, various opportunities for growth were presented. Focusing on higher education leadership allowed the researcher, who is a social historian, to expand her

academic interests into unforeseen realms including the history of higher education, transformational leadership, and organizational culture. Additionally, the value-added experiences of critical analysis, researching, writing, and organizational skills were present throughout. Furthermore, participating in the academic program reignited a passion for learning. Gone from the classroom as a student for more than a decade, the excitement to study and research new areas of interest returned and was constant throughout the experience. Finally, the challenges related to locus of control that were experienced throughout the entire process, but specifically during the doctoral study, were tremendous and beneficial life lessons.

With a reflective perspective aligned to years of studying student academic entitlement behavior, it should be noted, with complete honesty, that the researcher's interest in this phenomenon endures. Current literature affirms the presence of student academic entitlement behavior (Jackson et al., 2011; Miller, 2013), and, as such, researched attention to the phenomenon should be given. Aside from future research, the full immersion into the phenomenon of student academic entitlement behavior initiated the amendment of a long-embraced personal teaching philosophy that focused solely on learning. Now, the multifaceted philosophy balances a passion for learning, empowerment, accountability, collaboration, and student success.

### **The Project's Potential Impact on Social Change**

Presenting the study's findings in a position paper aids in increasing the awareness of faculty perceptions regarding student academic entitlement behavior. Increasing awareness of this phenomenon, especially from the perspective of faculty,

could help to promote and encourage positive social change at the institutional level. Additionally, emerged themes suggested various external causes, which included generational characteristics, past academic experience, and social media and reality television, and internal institutional actions, which included student as customer, institutional policies, actions of faculty, and actions of administration, as the predominant causes of the behavior. It is reasonable to assume that each educational institution has a unique organizational culture. It is also plausible to suggest that some, perhaps all, of the identified external and internal enabling factors are present within some institutions. As a result, the findings of this study and the subsequent project, which are unique due to its central focus on the faculty's perspective of the behavior, endorse the opportunity for positive social change throughout the academic community of higher education.

### **Implications, Applications, and Directions for Future Research**

In the scope of academic research, dating back to Confucius (5<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.) and Socrates (4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.), the study of student academic entitlement behavior has a minute presence on the historical timeline. Though attention to a facet of the phenomenon was given by way of Riesman's (1980) seminal work on the increase of student consumerism, future interest in the construct did not emerge until the 1990's with Delucchi and Smith's (1997) postmodern analysis of student consumerism. Generational studies, many of which focused on the impact of the Millennial generation within higher education, caused a predominate shift in research focus. Twenge's (2009) emphasis on students' narcissistic tendencies helped to guide the direction of future research. No longer was the focus solely on economic factors as change agents of higher education.

Beginning in 2009, researchers investigating student academic entitlement behavior concentrated on generational, environmental, and social causational factors (Lippmann et al., 2009; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2011; Schaefer et al., 2013). Because research on the construct is in early development, there is a great amount of research that could be conducted.

Guided by Morrow's (1994) conceptual framework that suggested when "entitlement presupposes achievement" valid academic achievement is threatened (p. 35), the objective of the current study was to address the following research questions:

1. How do faculty define student academic entitlement behavior?
2. What do faculty perceive as the cause(s) of student academic entitlement behavior?
3. What do faculty identify as the implication(s) of student academic entitlement behavior?
4. From the perspective of the faculty, what is needed from the institutional community to curtail student academic entitlement behavior?

In answering the research questions, the study adds to the collection of literature regarding student academic entitlement behavior. The study focused on understanding the faculty perceptions of the causes and implications of the behavior and provided recommendations from the faculty to diminish the behavior throughout the institution.

The findings from the current study indicated that faculty believe that student academic entitlement behavior is present within their institutional community. They believe that there are both external factors and internal reinforcements that fortify the



students' assumption that the behavior is acceptable. The faculty believe that the behavior is negatively impacting some of the students' learning experiences, and, as a result, has a related effect on the institution's external reputation with community stakeholders. The faculty suggest learning-focused recommendations to curtail student academic entitlement behavior including: clarifying the institutional expectations of its students; modification of the admissions policy to support student success; and offering professional development focused specifically on epistemological and andragogic methodology.

These findings provide a foundation for future research opportunities that were outside the scope of the current study. Because the study of the construct is in its "infancy" (Jackson et al., 2011, p. 53), there are tremendous opportunities to expand the study of student academic entitlement behavior. The first opportunity for a future study would be to duplicate the current study's purpose, but expand its scope to include additional institutions, securing different types of institutions (e.g., community college, state/public, private, and for profit) to afford a comparison among the faculty perceptions. A second opportunity for a future study would be to return to the current research and focus on the students' understanding of their roles and responsibilities and their understanding of the expectations that the institution has for them. An additional opportunity for a future study would be to concentrate on identifying faculty behaviors that enable student academic entitlement behavior. Such actions emerged as a low-level sub-theme within the current study and warrants further investigation to add to the limited scope of research within literature specific to the correlation between faculty and

the behavior. The findings of the current study suggested that various actions and adopted philosophies of the institutional community reinforced or enabled the behavior. An opportunity to quantify this development would be a longitudinal study in which academic entitlement tendencies were measured upon admittance to the institution and then again at the students' completion of his or her academic program. A final study opportunity would be seek to understand the phenomenon from the perspective of members within the executive administration.

### **Conclusion**

The final section of this doctoral study provided a reflection of the study's findings and the experiences and perceptions of the researcher. The findings of this study suggested that participants believe that some students have developed a sense of entitlement from exposure to various influences experienced before gaining admittance to the university. Further findings suggested that the faculty believe that student academic entitlement behavior, observed within the institutional environment, is enabled and reinforced through the actions of members of the institutional community that endorse a student as a customer philosophy. The faculty perceive student academic entitlement behavior to be negatively affecting the institution and the student's learning experience. By analyzing the emerged themes of the study, a position paper was developed in an effort to provide a forum for a dialogue between faculty and administration focusing on academic entitlement and strategies to address this problem in a realistic and appropriate manner for this research site and perhaps other institutions. This potential dialogue presents an opportunity for social change by offering the faculty's perceptions of a

potentially damaging behavior and is significant for educators who seek to initiate a conversation about the relationship between the student academic entitlement behavior and institutional practices.

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## Appendix A: Project

# **Faculty Insights Regarding Student Academic Entitlement Behavior: How the behavior is being encouraged and opportunities to lessen its presence**

## **Abstract**

The presence of student academic entitlement behavior exists within America's higher education system. Recognized as a possible by-product of various catalytic factors, research has focused primarily on the behavior from the perspective of a student. Recently, research collected at a regionally accredited proprietary university has presented findings focused solely on the perception of faculty. The findings suggest that the faculty believe that the university's approach to identify the student as a customer encourages student academic entitlement behavior and carries with it negative implications. However, the faculty suggested an institutional wide endorsement of a learning-focused environment in which all members of the institutional community are responsible for student success. To assist in initiating a discussion among the university's administration and faculty stakeholders, this position paper presents the university's faculty's perceptions of the causes and implications of academic entitlement behavior and provides the faculty's recommendations to impede the behavior.

**Nichole Gotschall  
June 29, 2015**

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## **Introduction**

The presence of student academic entitlement behavior exists within America's higher education system. Recognized as a possible by-product of various catalytic factors, research has focused primarily on the behavior from the perspective of a student. Recently, new research, collected at a regionally accredited proprietary university, has presented findings focused solely on the perception of faculty. The faculty acknowledge that some of today's students are entering the university with a sense of entitlement, learned from exposure to external factors prior to their admittance to the institution. However, the faculty believe that institutional philosophy of identifying students as customers is reinforcing, encouraging, and enabling academic entitlement behaviors to persist within the institution's student community, potentially negatively affecting some students' learning experience. In an effort to help diminish the behavior, the faculty recommend actions that embrace a learning-focused institutional community.

### **Student Academic Entitlement Behavior**

Student academic entitlement behavior is defined "the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success" (Chowning & Campbell, 2009, p. 982). Entitled students expect faculty to go "beyond their obligation of providing educational opportunities and effective, quality instruction" (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2011, p. 232). Students with such expectations lack an understanding of their roles and responsibilities within an educational environment, leading to the manifestation of inappropriate behavior and unrealistic expectations.

Some research has suggested that the behavior is attributed to the institutional response of an increase in competing institutions within the market place (Finney & Finney, 2010; Szekeres, 2010). By corporatizing, institutions have begun to "cater to students to boost enrollment numbers" (Lippmann, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009, p. 198), thus causing an increase in student academic entitlement behavior (Cain, Romanelli, & Smith, 2012; Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2010 & 2011).

Outside of the marketplace factors that drive change, researchers have focused on the correlation between multiple aspects of socio-culture factors and academic entitlement behavior (Boswell, 2012; Twenge, 2009). Much of the socio-cultural research has been constructed on the foundation of Twenge's (2009) research that suggested that the behavior of the Generation Y or Millennial student is a unique generational characteristic. Grounded in narcissistic actions, Twenge proposed that the learned behaviors of some Millennial students have amplified the perceived actions of student entitlement behavior.

The research suggesting generational factors as the cause of entitlement behaviors is not limited to the Millennial student. With the enrollments of adult learners (age twenty-five and older) projected to increase twenty percent by 2020, (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012, para. 6), academicians and researchers



acknowledge the adult learner as a “change agent” in higher education (Burns, 2011, p. 1). Generational research has begun to consider the behavior and expectations of the adult learners as important variables in decision making (Cercione, 2008). As a result of these factors affecting student behavior, concerns of student incivility and lack of responsibility (Kopp & Finney, 2013) and grade inflation (Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011) have risen, ultimately compromising the overall learning experience (Schaefer, Barta, Whitley, & Stogsdill, 2013).

The faculty acknowledge that some of today’s students are entering the university with a sense of entitlement, learned from exposure to external factors prior to their admittance to the institution. These external factors include generation characteristics, past academic performance, and social media and reality television. However, the faculty believe that the greater influence on student academic entitlement behavior is the institutional philosophy of identifying students as customers. The faculty suggests that embracing this philosophy, which serves as a catalyst for some administrative and faculty decisions, is reinforcing, encouraging, and enabling academic entitlement behaviors to persist within the institution’s student community, potentially having an adverse effect on some students’ learning experience.

### **The Challenges of the Student as Customer Philosophy**

Changes to the federal budget, an increasing unemployment rate, and the largest income inequity since the Great Depression changed the economic, political, and social environments of the United States and higher education responded. The number of institutions continued to grow. In 2005, the Carnegie Foundation identified more than 4,300 accredited nonprofit degree granting institutions. Additionally, there were more than 2,000 for-profit institutions. Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, with the increasing number of institutions, constricting pressure to recruit and retain students reflected a growing competition within the marketplace of higher education.

The resulting pressure has not been masked by the university’s administration and has been felt by the university’s faculty. As one faculty member expressed, it feels as if “we are in a bit of a dog fight right now.” No longer can the institution survive off of sourcing potential students from the single location of its own community. There are “fewer and fewer students” to fill the classrooms even with recruitment looking “beyond their usual hunting ground for students” (study participant).

Understanding the university’s position in a highly competitive marketplace, the participating faculty described the institution as having a student centered culture. However, within this for-profit institutional culture, the university does “tend to operate with more of a mind toward business,” and with this business mind a culture of “customer service...with the student being the customer” is maintained (study participant). Employing this student centered customer service model, some participants suggested that the student as a customer philosophy is sourced from the principal “incentive to keep people enrolled” and “keep the revenue streaming” (study participants).

Consequentially, the students know that they are considered the “customer” and because of this identification academic entitlement behavior is reinforced. Identifying themselves as customers, students utilize the term as justification to get what they want from faculty, staff, and administration. Several students have been overheard discussing their employed strategies, boasting that “all they have to do is threaten that they are going to go someplace else and everybody [administration and faculty] gets scared and does whatever they [the students] want them to do.” Students have been heard “joking about what they were able to accomplish when they make the threat of leaving” (study participant)

### **Institutional Practices that Reinforce Academic Entitlement Behavior**

**Attendance Policy.** The faculty suggest that the misapplication of the university’s attendance policy and its practices surrounding the enforcement of the policy encourage the demonstration of student academic entitlement behavior. Currently, the institution’s attendance policy for an on-campus course that meets four days a week during the eleven week academic term length states that a student is dropped from the course upon his or her eighth absence. At their discretion, faculty are permitted to reinstate a student by completing a reinstatement form. Faculty identified that the original intent of the reinstatement form was to help faculty encourage students not to miss class; however, some students have discovered that the “more they whine and cry and make complaints...they can get anything excused.” In an effort to keep the student/customer satisfied, some faculty believe that “any excuse is a good excuse” in regards to excused absences so they will not have to receive a request from administration to reinstate the student (study participants).

The leniency of the attendance policy also causes concern among the faculty. “Two weeks! We are talking about two weeks of class [the student] gets to lose; [the student] gets to miss” (study participant). The faculty believe that the attendance policy encourages the students to look upon his or her academic courses as if “there are two weeks in this ten week period, one-fifth of the class that is useless....That’s what we are telling students” (study participant). Again, it is perceived that the institutional effort to keep the students/customers happy through the application of a lenient attendance policy is reinforcing the opportunity for students to demonstrate academically entitled behaviors.

**Retention Policy.** In addition to the attendance policy, the institution has become “hyper-focused on retention in the wrong way” (study participant). The faculty firmly agree that retention efforts are important; however, there is concern regarding the intensity to which the institution employed its retention efforts. Currently, administration stresses the importance of retention through the use of weekly reports which are sent out to encourage faculty to retain students and maintain academic progression. However, the faculty expressed concerns about the extensive efforts to retain students who have demonstrated that they “simply can’t do the work” or “students that really don’t have the will or the want to be at this [academic] level” (study participants). The faculty’s perception is that the administration has “this mindset that

we [have to] hold on to every student that comes in the door” in an effort to maintain a presence within the highly competitive marketplace.

**Actions of Faculty and Administration.** The university embraces “a culture of wanting to do what is best for the student” (study participant). This desire to help the students, coupled with a continuous reminder of the magnitude of student retention, could result in actions from the faculty and administration that encourages and reinforces student academic entitlement behavior.

Embracing a student-centric environment, faculty expressed concerns regarding the observed actions of some of their colleagues. One faculty member described his concerns about some of his colleagues bowing to student demands in order to avoid a visit from administration regarding a “student complaint” or an official grade appeal. One participant identified her own experience, describing that she had witnessed a tremendous increase of student incivility in her classroom and her corrective actions resulted in student complaints and administrative involvement. Out of “frustration,” towards the end of the academic term she entered the classroom, provided the students and assignment and said “have at it” (study participant).

The faculty believe that actions of the administration also encourage or develop the behavior in students. Before the academic term begins, the incoming students attend an orientation. During the orientation, the incoming students are told that “the faculty member will do everything for them to accomplish their success” (study participant), asserting that the students’ faculty members are active members of the students’ academic experience, solely responsible for the students’ success. Consequentially, insinuating that the students are a passive participant, holding no responsibility in their academic experience. The faculty participants shared story after story of students’ recollections about what he or she was told during the Student Orientation, all reflecting the premise that the faculty was primarily responsible for the students’ success, as opposed to a “symbiotic” relationship that cohesively works to achieve the goal of learning (study participant).

Throughout the academic quarter, the perceived primary demonstration of administration that is believed to enable student academic entitlement behavior occurs when a student complains to a member of the administration about a grade. One such example was recounted by a faculty member describing a situation in which the administrator, instead of advising the student to talk with the faculty member first, contacted the faculty member’s department chair. The faculty member was not informed that the student had approached the administrator or that the administrator had contacted the faculty member’s department chair until she was approached by her department chair who directed the faculty member as to how to resolve the student’s complaint. Another example, shared by another faculty member, involved a student who complained to her admission’s representative about her earned grade. The admission’s representative then approached the faculty member’s dean, advising the dean that the situation “hadn’t been handled exactly right” by the faculty member. The dean investigated but found no evidence to support the student’s grade challenge. The student continued to complain to various members of the administration and, from the

perception of the participant, the message he received from administration was “find a way to make her [the student] happy.”

### **Implications of Student Academic Entitlement Behavior**

The primary perceived effect of the behavior is its negative effect on the students' learning. Identified as one of the behavior's manifestations, some students maintain a hyper-focus attention on grades. As customers of the university, some students may believe that they are entitled to a certain grade. Academically entitled students bring with them “an unrealistic expectation to the classroom and instead of approaching the subject that they are going to be learning as an opportunity to expand their knowledge, they may be coming in with the expectation of a grade” (study participant). Specifically, some students may maintain the mindset that they are an “A student and therefore, if I just do the work, then I am going to get an A” (study participant). When an A is not deservedly earned, some students complain or submit grade appeals, possibly initiating the enabling cycle noted previously. On a broader scale, it is believed that some students struggle to recognize the connection between the learning experience and earning the degree. Rather than considering the holistic relationship of the various courses that comprise the degree program, faculty suggest that students remain focused solely on the immediate assignment or course grade, ultimately impacting their universal learning experience due to his or her tunnel vision.

Secondly, some faculty are concerned for the institution's reputation if students, who have been catered to in lieu of academic prowess, graduate and enter the workforce. Ultimately, these unprepared or underprepared graduates could affect the institution's reputation. Concerned, one faculty noted “we want [emphasis] the students who will make a name for themselves at [the university] and show that [it] is a good school to go to.” She continued, “If we do give into the sense of entitlement and pass students along who are really a marginal student, in the long run those students are going to go out into the workforce and get a job and when that company knows that they earned their degree from [the university] they'll never hire other [one of our] graduates. For companies that pay tuition benefits, they certainly won't pay to send their employees there to earn a degree” (study participant).

The final effect of the behavior, as perceived by some of the participants, was the “fear” or “pressure” that has developed within the institutional environment, specifically within the faculty community, as a result of the institution's efforts to retain students/customers. As shared by one faculty member, we are told “in very clear language...that we are replaceable.” The faculty member further explained that “there is always this fear in the back of our minds that we could be replaced” and that “some people will do whatever it takes” to keep their jobs. Some faculty “may feel pressure to give into student entitlement....They don't want to be the object of a lot of grievances and allegations” (study participant).

The faculty believe that student academic entitlement behavior and its effects are “diluting the education and harming our reputation” (study participant). However, with all of the challenges and all of the negative effects of the behavior, the faculty care and

they want to help. As one faculty member shared, the university “gets in your blood.” The faculty are there because they want to be there. They want to share their passion for their subject fields, and they want their students to learn and get excited about learning. They care about their students’ successes...and failures. Because they care, they also have identified various recommendations for the university to consider in an effort to diminish student academic entitlement behavior.

### **Opportunities to Lessen Student Academic Entitlement Behavior**

To assist in reducing the behavior, the faculty have proposed solutions that embrace philosophies that are present in a learning-focused environment. Historically, the faculty member’s principal responsibility was to “transmit a body of knowledge” to the student population. This transmission traditionally took place in lecture format. The seating arrangement within a lecture-hall suggested that the teacher was the “featured act in a show” and was “the only one in the room doing anything worth paying attention to” (Berrett, 2014, para. 1 & 2). The students were often times “required to assume a passive learning role” as the teacher provided the lecture (Stefaniak & Tracey, 2015, p. 97). It was expected that students arrive to class, having completed all assigned readings and prepared to take copious notes throughout the provided lecture (p. 97). However, in 1995, Robert Barr and John Tagg encouraged the higher education community to consider a paradigm shift in which the focus is not “what the instructor does” but rather “what the students learn” (Mostrom & Blumberg, 2012, p. 398). They advocated for a new approach in which institutions would no longer strive “to provide instruction,” but rather “produce learning” (para. 1).

A learning-focused paradigm would initiate a new approach in which each member of the institutional community, faculty, staff/administration, and students, is responsible for producing learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995, para. 14). At the foundation, the mission of the institution within this paradigm is to engender learning (para. 13). Institutional policies and procedures are reflective of the primary objective of learning. Faculty are responsible for creating “environments and experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves.” New opportunities to reinforce the mission to produce learning are “identified, developed, tested, implemented, and assessed against each other,” affording the faculty the continuous cycle of professional development (para. 17). The students become the “co-producers of learning” and assume the “responsibility for their own learning” (para. 14). Ultimately, the goal within this learning-focused environment is “success,” not just “access” (para. 18).

The recommendations identified by the faculty are reflective of a learning-focused paradigm, and demonstrate the university’s ethos of “I care.” The primary recommendation from the faculty is to encourage the institution’s community to remember the importance of communicating clear expectations to the student population and maintaining the standards and expectations, especially when some entitled students challenge the standards and expectations. The faculty also noted their concerns regarding the university’s admissions policy and offered general recommendations that support student success. Finally, the faculty discussed the importance of professional development among the faculty and administration.



**Clear Expectations.** The notion of the importance of clear expectation is specific at both the classroom level and institutional level. As suggested by a faculty member, “if the instructor or the institution is not sending a clear and consistent message, then it opens the door for subjectivity.” It is in this realm of subjectivity “where academic entitlement lives” because “entitlement thrives when there is ambiguity.”

**Classroom Level.** The faculty offered suggestions that could be immediately introduced into a classroom setting, possibly decreasing the presence of or opportunity for the development of student academic entitlement behavior.

- Ensure that the course is clearly designed (objectives, curriculum map, assignment description and criteria, and rubric), affording students the opportunity to “learn to adhere to the criteria” without limiting “their creativity or their ability to generate theory” (study participant).
- Identify to the students classroom/course expectations in regards to “student conduct [and] student respect towards faculty and other students” (study participant).
- Stress the importance of “personal integrity” (study participant).
- Communicate expectations immediately and ongoing throughout the course. As one faculty member noted, “I give them answers before they have questions.”
- Identify the standards and expectations and take continuous actions to ensure that the students understand the importance of the standards and expectations. Faculty must demonstrate to the students that “you will stick to the standards you set forth” (study participant).
- Maintain a balance. There “is a balance where you can be an excellent faculty member but not give in” to the unreasonable or unrealistic demands of an academically entitled student (study participant).

**Institutional Level.** The participants’ perceptions of the importance of clarifying the institutional expectations of the student population focused primarily within the information that is communicated to incoming students during orientation. The current orientation session that incoming students must attend is an “excellent opportunity” to clearly identify the expectations of the university with respect to the role and responsibilities of the university’s students. The faculty identified opportunities that could be implemented into the orientation.

- Encourage the students in a manner that does not afford them the opportunity to misinterpret the information that they are provided concerning to the institution’s expectations of their roles and responsibilities as a student.
- Restate important institutional policies.

- Identify support resources (Library, Tutoring Center, Wellness Center, etc.).
- Inform the students that the faculty do care about the students' success, and, they want the student to succeed. However, the faculty are not going to do the work *for* the student. The faculty and the student have a "symbiotic" relationship (study participant).
- Create an orientation for each degree program or academic department that would allow for the department leadership and faculty to define the "program specific expectations" to the incoming students (study participant).

**Admittance to Institution.** The second recommendation from the faculty to aid to reducing the presence of student academic entitlement behavior relates to the institution's current admission's practice. Faculty recognize and understand that "numbers are important;" students are needed. However, the faculty have provided recommendations that could assist the institution in strengthening its academic prowess, but also help improve the support it offers to students as they identify a chosen degree program. The faculty recommendations are as follows:

- Offer a new entrance exam which is administered by a third party and not administered by the recruiting team of the institution. This would help to ensure transparency and a lack of bias.
- Incorporate a career aptitude test into the admission's process to help ensure that the students' are enrolling into an academic program for which they are aligned. Offering this type of assessment will allow the university "to better guide students into their degree programs" (study participant).
- Develop and offer a "Discover the Field" for students or interested individuals to learn, from professionals/faculty in the various fields, more about the specific careers that align to their degree program.
- Incorporate an interview into the application and admission process to ensure that the applicant is just as dedicated to achieving this goal as the faculty and staff are to working with them. The interview could help determined that the student "isn't a student that just expects to be given a piece of paper that says [the university's name] on it."
- Currently, the university is without a Code of Honor that students must sign upon their admittance to the school. Faculty recommend the development of an honor code to aid in communicating the university's expectations of the students.

**Professional Development Opportunities.** The final recommendation to assist in curtailing student academic entitlement behavior was the incorporation of faculty professional development opportunities. "Graduate schools have by and large abdicated their role in training faculty...it is up to the institution to train their faculty, to set their expectations for their faculty, and to train faculty how to meet those expectations" (study participant). Furthermore, the faculty are experts in their particular discipline and field of study. However, as noted by one faculty member, we need focus on "being smarter educators and being better at teaching. But this is where

the school needs to step in more.” The university currently offers professional development (PD) opportunities through online presentations, which are “very helpful.” However, because the faculty would like more PD opportunities that focus on developing a strong curriculum and working with the complexities associated with the dynamics of today’s student populations. “Let’s talk about how to make effective measurements of the learning experience because to me, that’s important. I really do care about what I do and I care about whether or not the student learns, so help me with that” (study participant)!

Some of the participants also suggested that administration need to maintain a presence in the classroom in order to understand and be able to identify with the described experiences of the faculty. As stated by a faculty member, administrators need to teach “at least one class per year.” Another faculty member noted, “administrators who spend all of their time in the office and not in the trenches can get disconnected from this process.” However, in order to truly take action to curtail student academic entitlement behavior “you have to have buy-in from the administration.” The administration must acknowledge that “yes, this is a situation that exists and yes, it is a problem, and yes, we want to change it.” When this “conclusion has been made, I think that the administration can come down to the faculty level to partner and work it out how they are going to work together to make this change” (study participant).

## Conclusion

Student academic entitlement behavior is present within today’s higher education institutions and has been observed at this university. Thankfully the administration and the faculty of the university care enough about their academic community to participate in a research study that sought to understand how the faculty, the front-line within the academic arena, perceived the behavior. The faculty suggest that some students are entering the institution with a sense of entitlement learned from external factors. However, various actions and philosophies are reinforcing, encouraging, and enabling the behavior, causing it to persist within the university’s environment, ultimately resulting in negative effects. In an effort to help lessen the behavior, the faculty have suggested various opportunities for consideration and possible implementation.



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## Appendix B: Email Regarding Doctoral Study at Study Site

Inbox x

 **Nichole Gotschall** <[REDACTED]>  
to [REDACTED] Aug 19, 2014

**Re Information regarding doctoral study at [REDACTED]**

[REDACTED],

Thank you for bringing this to Dr. [REDACTED] and Dr. [REDACTED] attention. Below is a brief overview of the purpose of the study and the anticipated data collection approach.

As you know, I am enrolled at Walden University's working to earn my Doctorate of Education in Higher Education Leadership. I have completed all of my course work and recently passed my first oral defense. At this time I am completing Walden's IRB application and am seeking permission to conduct my doctoral study at [REDACTED] during the upcoming Fall 2014 Quarter. The study is a qualitative case study on student academic entitlement behavior. The purpose of the study is to understand what faculty identify as the causes and implications of this behavior. Furthermore, the study seeks to learn of recommendations from the faculty perspective of actions that can be taken to curtail the behavior.

In order to perform the study, I would request that I be permitted to recruit between ten and twelve faculty members who have taught at [REDACTED] for a minimum of one year (online or resident; part-time or full-time) and will be teaching during the Fall 2014 Quarter. The selected participants would be asked to participate in a forty-five minute one-on-one semi-structured interview and a follow-up ten-minute phone meeting in which the participants will be asked to review their transcribed interview, verify it for accuracy, and offer any additional information. Faculty who volunteer to participate will be given a consent form to review and sign, which, along with the invitation to participate, will inform them of the anticipated procedures of the study as well as their rights and role within the study. In keeping with the ethical practice of research, throughout the study and after its completion, the identification of the study site and the identification of the study's participants will remain anonymous and kept in full confidence.

Understanding that time is precious, I have attached a Letter of Cooperation--just in case. Please let me know if you need any additional information at this time. Again, my thanks. Looking forward to talking again towards the end of the week.

All the best,  
Nicky

## Appendix C: Letter of Cooperation

Nichole Gotschall

[REDACTED]

August 19, 2014

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]:

I am writing to request permission to conduct a research study at [REDACTED] during the Fall Quarter of 2014. I am currently studying Higher Education Leadership at Walden University and am in the process of writing my doctoral study under the supervision of Dr. Elizabeth Bruch, doctoral committee chair and professor at Walden.

I am performing a qualitative case study on student academic entitlement behavior. The purpose of my study is to understand what faculty identify as the causes and implications of this behavior. Furthermore, the study seeks to learn of recommendations from the faculty perspective of actions that can be taken to curtail the behavior.

In order to perform the study, I hope that the school administration will allow me to recruit ten to twelve faculty members who have taught at [REDACTED] for a minimum of one year. The selected participants will be asked to participate in a forty-five minute one-on-one semi-structured interview. The selected participants will also be asked to review their transcribed interview and participate in a ten minute phone meeting with me to verify the accuracy of the transcription or to offer any additional information. Faculty who volunteer to participate and meet the criteria will be given a consent form to review and sign before returning the completed form to me at the start of our interview. Throughout this study and after its completion, I assure you that the identification of [REDACTED], as this study's research site, and the identification of the study's participants will be anonymous and kept in full confidence.

The approval to conduct this study will be greatly appreciated. I will follow up with a telephone call to you next week and will be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at this time. Please feel free to also contact me by phone, [REDACTED], or email, [REDACTED].

If permitted to conduct this study at [REDACTED], please sign below and return the signed form to address provided above. Alternatively, please feel free to submit a signed letter of permission on your institution's letterhead acknowledging your consent and approval for me to conduct this study at [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

Nichole Gotschall

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print your name and title here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print your name and title here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

#### Appendix D: Letter of Invitation to Participate in Doctoral Study (email)

##### Invitation to participate in the study of Student Academic Entitlement Behaviors

Dear Faculty Member,

Thank you for taking the time to consider this request to participate in a doctoral research study on student academic entitlement behavior. I am currently a doctoral student at Walden University. I am also an adjunct faculty member at [REDACTED]. One of the purposes of this doctoral study is to gather information from current higher education faculty members who have experienced a demonstration of student academic entitlement behavior. Through your perceptions, this study seeks gain an understanding of what faculty believe to be the causes and implications of such behavior and to identify what is needed from the institutional community to curtail the behavior.

Previously, studies regarding student academic entitlement behavior have focused on student actions, decisions, and their expectations regarding higher education institutions and faculty. This study is unique as it is centrally focused on the perceptions of the faculty.

The criteria for participation in the study are fourfold:

- the participants must have an institutional designation of faculty (adjunct or full-time)
- the participants have been teaching at the institution's main campus for a minimum of one year
- the participants must be teaching within the classroom (residential or online) during the academic term in which the data will be collected
- the participant must have experienced a demonstration of student academic entitlement behavior.

I am looking for faculty volunteers from across the institutional community to participate in the study. In order to learn about your perspective, a one-on-one semi-structured interview will be conducted. The interview will be conducted by telephone, audio recorded, and should only take about forty-five minutes of your time. Participants may answer all of the questions, opt to answer questions of their choosing, or may elect to withdraw from the study at any time. All interviews are confidential. Any reference to a faculty member's perspective in the data analysis will be via a pseudonym. You have no risk of disclosure of confidential information, psychological stress, social or economic loss, perceived coercion, experimental deception, or health effects from the researcher. If you choose to share your experiences regarding your participation in the study with individuals other than me, it is done on your own accord. The identity of the college will also remain confidential. All participants will be able to review their transcribed interview before the start of the data analysis. Once the participant's review is completed

he or she will participate in a ten minute phone meeting with me to verify the accuracy of the transcription or to offer any additional information. While there is no offered compensation for your participation, your contributions may help institutions understand and effectively address student academic entitlement behavior.

You may ask any question you have now. Or, if you have questions later, you may contact me via phone at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. You may also contact my doctoral study chair, Dr. Elizabeth Bruch, by email at [REDACTED]. If you would like to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210.

Thank you for considering participating in this project!  
Sincerely,

Nichole (Nicky) Gotschall  
Doctoral Student  
Walden University

Appendix E: Telephone Script in Response to Potential Participants' Email Declaring Intent to Participate in Study (Study Criteria)

Hello. My name is Nicky Gotschall. You have recently responded to my email inviting you to participate in my doctoral study regarding student academic entitlement behavior. The purpose of the study is to research what faculty identify as the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior. Furthermore the study seeks to identify strategies to curtail the behavior.

Let's take a moment to make certain that you meet the criteria for this study:

1. Do you hold an institutional designation as Faculty (adjunct or full-time)?
2. Have you been teaching at the institution for a minimum of one year?
3. Are you currently teaching during this academic term?
4. Have you experienced a demonstration of what you consider to be student academic entitlement behavior?

(If the respondent answered "no" to one of the above questions, he or she do not meet the criteria of the study and will therefore be excused. Follow this script:

Thank you for taking the time to answer these questions. I am sorry, but you do not fit the criteria of this study because \_\_\_\_\_. Thank you for your interest in participating in the study.

(If the respondent answered "yes" to all of the above questions, they do meet the criteria of the study and can therefore be scheduled for the interview. Follow this script:

Thank you for taking a moment to answer the criteria question. You do fit the criteria for this study. Would you be interested in participating in the study?

(Answer any questions, schedule the time and place for the interview, and gather information to send participant the informed consent form.)



## Appendix F: Consent Form for Interview Participants

You are invited to take part in a research study that seeks to understand faculty perceptions of the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior. You were selected for the study because you are a faculty member who is teaching in the current academic term at [REDACTED], and you have been teaching, either online or on campus, at [REDACTED]'s main campus for at least one year. This form is part of a process called "informed consent" which is completed to allow you to understand this study before deciding whether to take part.

This study is being conducted by Ms. Nichole Gotschall, who is a doctoral student at Walden University studying Higher Education Leadership.

### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to understand what faculty perceive as the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior and identify strategies employed to curtail the behavior.

### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a personal interview with the researcher that will last approximately forty-five minutes. You will also be asked to review your transcribed interview and participate in a ten minute phone meeting with the researcher to verify the accuracy of the transcription or to offer any additional information.

### **Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Your participation in the study is voluntary. This means that everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to participate in the study. No one at the university will treat you differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to participate in the study now, you can still change your mind during the study. If you feel uncomfortable at any time during the study you may discontinue your participation. You may also choose to decline to answer any question during the scheduled interview.

### **Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

The benefit of participating in this study is that your input may be used to understand the causes and implications of student academic entitlement behavior and acknowledge recommendations for curtailing the behavior.

The participant has no risk of disclosure of confidential information, psychological stress, social or economic loss, perceived coercion, experimental deception, or health effects from the researcher. If you choose to share your experiences regarding your participation in the study with individuals other than the researcher, it is done on your own accord.

**Payment:**

There is no compensation for your participation in this study.

**Privacy:**

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. The researcher will not use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name on anything that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept securely in the researcher's private home office on her personal password protected computer. Data will be kept for a period of at least five (5) years, as required by Walden University.

**Contacts and Questions:**

You may ask any question you have now. Or, if you have questions later, you may contact the researcher via phone at [REDACTED] or by email at [REDACTED]. If you would like to talk privately about your rights as a participant, you can call Dr. Leilani Endicott. She is the Walden University representative who can discuss this with you. Her phone number is 612-312-1210. Walden University's approval number for this study is #11-10-14-0282669 and it expires on November 9, 2015.

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I feel I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I understand that I am agreeing to the terms described above.

Printed Name of the Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date of consent \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G: Interview Protocol

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Introduction Script:*

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. Our interview should take about 45-minutes and will include a series of questions to find out about your experiences with and perceptions about student academic entitlement behavior. It is through interviews with members of the college's faculty that this study seeks to understand what faculty consider to be the causes and implications of academic entitlement behavior and what actions the faculty believe should be taken to curtail the behavior.

With your permission, I would like to audio record our interview so that I may be able to accurately document your experiences and perceptions. All of your responses, as well as the identity of the college, will be kept confidential, so please feel comfortable to answer all of the questions. However, if you wish to not answer a certain question or questions, you may do so as well. Also, if you would like for me, at any time during our discussion, to discontinue the use of the recording device, please feel free to let me know.

After we conclude our interview, I will transcribe our conversation. I will then provide you with a copy of the transcription. I ask that you review the transcribed interview and then participate in a ten minute phone meeting with me to verify the accuracy of the transcription or to offer any additional information.

As identified in the provided consent form, your participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If you would like to take a break or return to a previous question, please let me know. Also, you may also withdraw your participation at any time without consequence. Do you have any questions or concerns before we begin?

Then, with your permission, we will begin our interview.

### **General background questions:**

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.
2. How would you describe your role and responsibilities at the university?

3. How would you describe the culture of the institution?

**General questions regarding student academic entitlement behavior:**

1. How would you define student academic entitlement behavior?
2. How prevalent do you think academic entitlement behavior is at the university?
3. Please tell me about an event or a time in which you have experienced student academic entitlement behavior?

**Questions regarding the causes and/or implications of student academic entitlement behavior:**

1. What would you identify as the primary cause of student entitlement behavior?
  - a. Follow-up: What additional factors do you believe cause or intensify student academic entitlement behavior?
2. How do you believe that academic entitlement behavior is impacting the students' learning experience?
3. How is student academic entitlement behavior impacting you as a faculty member of the faculty?
  - a. Follow-up: How do you believe the behavior is impacting the faculty community at the university?
4. How do you believe academic entitlement behavior affects the overall institution?
  - a. Follow-up: How does institutional culture foster or enable the behavior within the student population?
  - b. Follow-up: What institutional policies or procedures enable a demonstration of academic entitlement behaviors?

**Questions regarding actions to take to curtail student academic entitlement****behavior:**

1. What actions have you taken to curtail student academic entitlement behavior?
2. What actions should the faculty as a community/group take to curtail the behavior?
3. What actions could the institution's administration take to curtail the behavior?
4. What actions could the institution as a whole take to curtail the behavior?

**Final Question:**

1. Before we conclude our interview, is there anything else that you would like to share?

*Conclusion Script:*

It is my plan to have our interview transcribed within the next four calendar days. I will email the transcription of our interview to you, using your college email address. Please review the transcription and offer any comments or clarification points as necessary. Again, thank you for allowing me to interview you about academic entitlement behavior.